

elaborated in a detailed reading of the play (pp. xxxiv–lix), obviously runs the risk of abstraction, but the dichotomy of art and nature was important in Renaissance thought and in Shakespeare (witness *The Winter's Tale*). I would place the emphasis differently, but it is a perfectly coherent interpretation of the play, and only an Althusserian could see this a-political, philosophico-aesthetic concept as the tool of 'incipient bourgeois hegemony'. This lumbering and pompous phrase has become an automatic reflex, a substitute for thought. In fact, a large proportion of any Cultural Materialist essay on Shakespeare is spent setting out the approved terminology, as if that in itself constituted an argument. This is another case where, as a critic of Althusser drily observed, the 'terminological acquisitions are far more numerous than actual conceptual advances' (Timpanaro 1975, p. 193).

The ideological agenda is predictable, and the play dutifully conforms to it. Prospero's laconic 'Here in this island we arrived' (1.2.171) is said to describe 'the relationship between the Europeans and the island's inhabitants' (p. 199) — that is, all two Europeans, Prospero and the infant Miranda, over and against Caliban (Ariel lives in the elements). Prospero's 'arbitrary rule . . . over the island and its inhabitants' (plural again) is an 'act of usurpation' (pp. 199–200). Not content with exploiting him, Prospero has a fiendishly clever strategy which 'reduces Caliban to a role in the supporting sub-plot, as instigator of a mutiny that is programmed to fail, thereby forging an equivalence between Antonio's initial *putsch* and Caliban's revolt' (p. 201). Our authors never notice that the revolt is entirely Caliban's idea, and that, far from being Prospero's doing, it surprises and angers him. Nor do they observe that the plot of Caliban, Stephano and Trinculo against Prospero functions in the play as a parallel to the *new* plot of the usurping Duke Antonio and Sebastian against Sebastian's brother Alonso, King of Naples. Instead, they conclude that Shakespeare manipulated Caliban into this position so that 'the playing out of the colonialist narrative is thereby completed: Caliban's attempt — tarred with the brush of Antonio's supposedly self-evident viciousness — is produced as final and irrevocable confirmation of the natural treachery of savages' (*ibid.*). But Shakespeare nowhere makes such general affirmations, whether about savages or anyone else. Antonio's viciousness is more than 'supposedly self-evident': it is extremely evident to anyone who is actually seeing or reading the play with a clear and open mind. The fact that Barker and Hulme end by attributing to *the play* an 'anxiety' about its ending, the play itself somehow bringing about a 'comic closure' as a means of 'quelling . . . a fundamental disquiet concerning its own functions within the projects of colonialist discourse' (pp. 203–4), shows, I think, the extent to which an ideology can rewrite a play in its own image.

The strong master narrative has won again, as it always will, if we let it. The play cannot resist; we can.

Epilogue: Masters and Demons

I wish to emphasize from the very beginning that the attitude taken here is of a very personal character. I do not believe that there is any single approach to the history of science which could not be replaced by very different methods of attack; only trivialities permit but one interpretation.

Otto Neugebauer¹

Looking back through this book, and reflecting on the very diverse range of material it has dealt with, one common element stands out, the degree to which critics pick up the ideas of a 'Modern Master' and model their accounts of literature on the patterns he provides. Whether Freud, Derrida, Lacan, Foucault, Althusser, whether feminist or Christian, one thought-system is taken over as setting the standards by which Shakespeare should be read. Critics derive their assumptions about language and literature, their methodology (in some cases the renunciation of method), their attitudes to life even, from a law-giving individual or system. Adoption of the system usually seems to deprive them of the power to criticise it, or even to reflect on it critically. It is to be absorbed entire, demonstrated or validated through being imposed on this or that play. On the one side the master, on the other his pupils or slaves. The destructive effects of such allegiance were clearly shown by Francis Bacon in 1605:

And as for the overmuch credit that hath been given unto authors in sciences, in making them dictators, that their words should stand, and not counsels to give advice; the damage is infinite that sciences have received thereby, as the principal cause that hath kept them low, at a stay without growth or advancement.

In the mechanical arts, Bacon saw, a constant process of improvement and development takes place, but in philosophy all too often attention has been captured by the system of one thinker, which loyal exegetes 'have rather depraved than illustrated. For as water will not ascend higher than the level of the first spring-head from whence it descendeth, so knowledge derived from Aristotle, and exempted from the liberty of examination, will not rise again higher than the knowledge of Aristotle'. Bacon's conclusion is that 'disciples do owe unto masters only a temporary belief and a suspension of their own judgment until they be fully instructed, and not an absolute resignation or perpetual captivity. . . .'² All too often today, it seems to me, the 'absolute resignation' to a master system, 'exempted from

the liberty of examination' not only fails to advance thought but makes it shrink, as lesser wits 'deprave' the original system by a mechanical and unimaginative reproduction of it.

The too loyal follower, passive and uncritical, seems to be imprisoned by the system he has adopted. To Bacon the bad effect of inquiry being restricted to a single system was shown by the medieval scholastics, whose

wits being shut up in the cells of a few authors (chiefly Aristotle their dictator) as their persons were shut up in the cells of monasteries and colleges . . . did out of no great quantity of matter and infinite agitation of wit, spin out unto us those laborious webs of learning which are extant in their books. (*Works*, 3.285)

The same metaphor occurred to Edward Said in the 1980s to describe Foucault's concept of the ubiquity of power-structures making political engagement pointless: 'Foucault's theory has drawn a circle around itself, constituting a unique territory in which Foucault has imprisoned himself and others with him' (Said 1983, p. 245). At much the same time E.P. Thompson used a variant of the metaphor to convey his feeling of being 'invited to enter the Althusserian theatre', where once inside 'we find there are no exits' (Thompson 1978, p. 32). 'Men imprison themselves within systems of their own creation' also, Thompson writes, 'because they are *self-mystified*' (*ibid.*, p. 165). Certainly their disciples are. I could wish for Shakespeare criticism in future more of the sturdy independence proclaimed by the American composer Virgil Thomson: 'I follow no leaders, lead no followers'.³

New perhaps in literary studies, the phenomenon of willing slavehood in the history of thought is ancient. Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, Descartes, Hegel — many thinkers have attracted disciples, who have loyally expounded their works and re-interpreted contemporary issues in the same terms. In those cases a body of thought existed which was argued through, sometimes polemically and unfairly (Plato against the Sophists, say), but generally with due regard for evidence, accurate citation of instances, and the avoidance of self-contradiction. Not all of our current masters measure up to, or even accept these standards. Freud's work is notoriously speculative, a vast theoretical edifice elaborated with a mere pretence of corroboration, citing 'clinical observations' which turn out to be false, with contrary evidence suppressed, data manipulated, building up over a forty-year period a self-obscuring, self-protective mythology. The system of Derrida, although disavowing systematicity, is based on several unproven theses about the nature of language which are supported by a vast expanding web of idiosyncratic terminology, setting up an autohermeneutical process which disguises the absence of proof or evidence adequate to meet external criteria. Lacan's system, even more vastly elaborated, is surrounded by another series of devices evading accountability, while Althusser's system has been judged 'wholly self-confirming. It moves

within the circle not only of its own problematic but of its own self-perpetuating and self-elaborating procedures' (Thompson 1978, p. 12). As for Foucault, Thomas Pavel has acutely described his evasiveness on these issues as an "empirico-transcendental sidestepping", which consists in conducting arguments on two levels at the same time without a system of transitions. If historical proof is missing in such a demonstration, the author will borrow from the language of metaphysics; when philosophical coherence is wanting, he will claim that the subject matter is only history' (Pavel 1989, p. 85). Foucault places himself beyond criticism with his non-empirical concepts of discursive formations and epistemes, but, as Pavel observes, this 'transcendental discourse surreptitiously takes charge of an empirical domain. The excessive indetermination inherent in the quasi-transcendental leads to mistreatment of facts, which because they are innumerable and precise need completely different types of categories' (pp. 93-4).

One common element in these new masters is the confidence with which they proclaim their ideas, untouched by doubt, or else (Derrida, Foucault) absorbing scepticism into a system that remains, all the same, dogmatic. Perry Anderson observed that Althusser's 'assertions of the scientific supremacy of Marxism had been more overweening and categorical' than anyone else's (Anderson 1983, pp. 29-30), and E.P. Thompson asked with English bluntness, 'how does Althusser have the neck?' (Thompson 1978, p. 122). Such dogmatism, as Gellner observed of Freud, although intellectually speaking deplorable, can be effective with credulous and uncritical readers: 'bare, brazen, unnegotiated assertion, if skilfully presented, can have a kind of stark authority' (Gellner 1985, pp. 42-3). It is a primitive rhetoric, of course, based on massive egotism, with a disdain for the petty details of argument and evidence, and to those aware of the great range of rational persuasion it is disappointing to see how successful mere assertion can be. Perhaps these system-builders had accepted B.F. Skinner's belief — devastated by Chomsky — that 'that proposition is most true which is enunciated most loudly and most often by most people'.⁴

Frederick Crews, one of the shrewdest observers of contemporary culture, describes 'the Grand Academy of Theory' that has arisen since the 1960s as marked by 'a new peremptoriness of intellectual style, emboldening thinkers to make up their own rules of inquiry or simply to turn their whim into law. Such liberation from the empirical ethos', he observes, easily promotes 'a relativism that dismisses the whole idea of seeking truth' (Crews 1986, p. 163). Crews diagnoses in this period a growth of 'apriorism — a willingness to settle issues by theoretical decree, without even a pretense of evidential appeal' (p. 164). In 1960, he argues, most people would have agreed with R.S. Crane that an 'essential attribute of the good scholar is "a habitual distrust of the a priori; that is to say, of all ways of arriving at particular conclusions which assume the relevance and

authority, prior to the concrete evidence, of theoretical doctrines or other general propositions".⁵ (Many writers in many fields still share that distrust.) In the fashionable world of self-proclaimed new theory today, by contrast, participants practise 'theoreticism' — frank recourse to unsubstantiated theory, not just as a tool of investigation but as anti-empirical knowledge in its own right.' By empiricism Crews means (like E.P. Thompson) 'simply a regard for evidence', choosing between rival ideas on the basis of observed phenomena, or an appeal to the text, a process in which the individual necessarily acknowledges the judgment of the scientific community. The basic justification for empiricism, he believes, 'consists of active participation in a community of informed people who themselves care about evidence and who can be counted on for unsparing criticism' (p. 164), what he elsewhere calls 'the principle of intersubjective skepticism' (p. 169).

In place of those principles — which to me constitute a genuine link between the humanities and the natural sciences, so different in other respects — Crews documents the presence of 'wilful assertion' in modern theory (p. 165), the unique combination of 'antinomian rebellion and self-indulgence' that 'comes down to us from the later Sixties', that 'dogmatism of intellectual style' so evident in the work of 'Lévi-Strauss, Barthes, Lacan, Althusser, Foucault, and Derrida' (p. 168). One quality these 'gurus of theoreticism' share is that 'all of them neglect or openly dismiss the principle of intersubjective skepticism' (p. 169). Althusser and Lacan were both 'absolutists' who, under the guise of returning to their founding fathers, Marx and Freud, arbitrarily selected those elements that suited them and by 'brazen decree' or *fiat*, with an explicit 'disdain for corroboration', launched their own systems (*ibid.*). In their hands, as Crews perceptively observes, Marxism and psychoanalysis

exchange an adaptive materialism for allegory. There is no point at which they unambiguously intersect experience and therefore no point where one of their contentions could be modified by behavioral data. They have become, not critiques of inhumane arrangements or guidelines for practical intervention, but master transcoding devices which will sort any text or problem into sets of formally opposed categories. (p. 170)

That dematerialisation of a discipline, reducing it from reality to language, so to speak, is something that I have commented on several times in my discussion of these trends (Chapters 1, 2, 5, 7). The 'poststructural cynicism' of Derrida and Foucault, as Crews describes it, deliberately distanced itself from the concepts of empiricism, evidence, and the notion of a community to whom interpretations are referred. 'Derrida's judgment that "there is nothing outside the text" (Derrida 1976, p. 158) automatically precludes recourse to evidence', while in Foucault's historical works, although 'portentous significance' is attached 'to certain develop-

ments and details, his epistemological pronouncements appear to rule out the very concept of a fact' (p. 171). This description echoes Thomas Pavel's analysis, just quoted, with remarkable accuracy. E.P. Thompson has documented a similar slipperiness in Althusser, who 'simplifies his own polemics by caricaturing . . . "empiricism", and ascribing to it, indiscriminately and erroneously, "essentialist" procedures of abstraction', making a 'continuous, wilful and theoretically crucial confusion between "empiricism" (that is, philosophical positivism and all its kin) and the empirical mode of intellectual practice' (Thompson 1978, pp. 6, 10). Rejecting any notion of positivism as privileging the natural sciences and their (once upon a time!) claim to objective certainties, I stand by the 'empirical mode of intellectual practice', which appeals to the experience of reading in order to ground an argument by citing evidence from a (usually) printed text, available to all, subject to interpretation and open discussion. This principle maligned, the theoretician is free to make whatever assertions he wishes.

The general effect of this absolutism among the Masters of the New Paradigm is to produce what Crews calls an 'appetite for unquestioning belief' on the part of followers matched by, or deriving from, the theorist's 'refusal to credit one's audience with the right to challenge one's ideas on dispassionate grounds' (p. 172). The theorist displays a 'scorn for independent criteria of judgment' that — 'as we ought to have learned by now from the larger political realm' — 'is ultimately a means, not of fostering spontaneity and liberation, but of guaranteeing that entrenched leaders will not be contradicted . . .' (p. 118). The result is the depressing state reached in the 1980s, where

Sectarian zeal, which now appears stronger than ever in the academy, provides all the guidance required to tell which tenets should be discarded or updated to match the latest political wisdom. (pp. 172–3)

A state of 'fierce parochialism' exists within the university, which would astonish the outsider (perhaps imagining that we are still dedicated to discovering 'the best that has been thought and said'), a combative situation where one 'pugnacious clique' fights another, each group refusing to adapt its method 'to the intellectual problem at hand' (p. 173). As Edward Said independently observed, where once a critical consensus existed that at least disagreement could be confined within certain agreed limits, now there is 'a babel of arguments for the limitlessness of all interpretation; . . . for all systems that in asserting their capacity to perform essentially self-confirming tasks allow for no counterfactual evidence' (Said 1983, p. 230). If you have the system, what else do you need?

The 1960s iconoclasts quite consciously tried to guarantee a *carte blanche* for their own system-building by destroying the criteria of objectivity, empirical practice, evidence. Barthes was reporting on an established change of direction when he announced in 1963 the good news that

the human sciences are losing some of their positivist obsession: structuralism, psychoanalysis, even Marxism prevail by the coherence of their system rather than by the 'proof' of their details: we are endeavouring to construct a science which includes itself within its object, and it is this infinite 'reflexiveness' which constitutes, facing us, art itself: science and art both acknowledge an original relativity of object and inquiry. (Barthes 1972, pp. 277–8)

Barthes was accurate in putting structuralism in first place. As the sociologist Simon Clarke showed in his penetrating study of that movement, Lévi-Strauss's first major work, *Les Structures Élémentaires de la Parenté* (1949; English tr. 1969) offered a theory of kinship which was prophetic in having 'no significant empirical content'. To have an empirical content a theory 'must tell us something about the world', both what it is like and what it is not like; that is, such a theory must be falsifiable. However, Clark argues, 'Lévi-Strauss's theory of kinship is not falsifiable because it is consistent with any possible set of data'. Rather than telling us 'anything about the form or the operation of the kinship systems that we can find in actually existing societies', Lévi-Strauss's theories simply reduced 'these systems to abstract models that are supposedly located in the unconscious', determining all observable structures (Clarke 1981, p. 54).

The epistemology of structuralism, which took the object of any science to be an ideal object, not any particular empirical object (p. 102), meant that it espoused a relativism which simply dismissed any evaluation of theories by reference to reality. The result, as Clarke puts it, was that structuralism adopted

the rationalist slogan 'save the theory' as a counter to the old empiricist slogan 'save the appearances': the task of the scientist is . . . to create a closed logical theory of an ideal object and not to worry about the correspondence between this object and a mythical reality. (p. 103)

The task of science, according to structuralism, is 'not to create a view of the world that is true', but to find a theory which offers 'a coherent and logical framework for discourse. . . . Thus positivism is preserved by turning into a form of rationalism' (*ibid.*) — Barthes's pronouncement of the death of positivism was premature. The structuralist methodological separation of the ideal object from reality, although preferable to older and cruder positivism, Clarke judges, had 'serious dangers'. It allowed its users to preserve theories which could not be falsified by empirical evidence, however overwhelmingly opposed, such as Lévi-Strauss's kinship theories (pp. 103–104). Other followers protected their models by claiming that they existed 'undetected and undetectable in the unconscious'. This happened, as we saw, with Althusser's 'symptomatic' reading of Marx, and his relegation of ideology to the unconscious, and it happened with Foucault's 'epistemes', the construct of a 'system of thought that is an ideal

object, . . . only inadequately and incompletely expressed in the work of a particular thinker'. (Foucault's theory can never be refuted by appeal to the evidence of a particular thinker's not corresponding to the episteme, for this merely shows that the thinker 'had inadequately expressed it'.) Throughout structuralism, Clarke concludes, 'the rationalist development of positivism is the basis on which it is the theory that is made the judge of the evidence and not vice versa' (p. 104).

This, I argue, is exactly the point at which Current Literary Theory has stuck. As — to use Barthes's words — 'a science which includes itself within its object', it is self-contained and endlessly reflexive, not concerned with empirical enquiry into the make-up of the literary work, the complementary roles of writer and reader, the nature of genres, the possibilities of style, or the conventions of representing reality and human behaviour. It pursues the 'closed logical theory of an ideal object', ignoring any 'correspondence between this object and a mythical reality'. Attractive though this option may be to those who believe that Pure Theory is a superior object of study, it is very dubious that it could ever constitute a theory of literature. To begin with, any theory is already a selection from the phenomena to be discussed. No theory can explain everything, so some selection must be made in advance: 'every theory is a theory about a part of the whole that is the world that we daily confront' (p. 130). Current Literary Theory gets along, as I have pointed out several times, by simply ignoring large areas in linguistics, philosophy of language, and rival literary theories. The 'part of the world' that is confronted is truly tiny. But what, in fact, is it a theory of? One basic principle of intellectual enquiry is that

If a theory is to have any explanatory value it must be possible, in principle, to falsify the claims made by that theory empirically. Such falsification can only be achieved within the terms of the theory, and so can never be absolute. However if it is to be possible at all the theory must define its object independently of its explanations. (*ibid.*)

As we have seen, that is precisely what the systems of Lacan, Althusser, Foucault and Derrida were designed not to do. As Clarke rightly observes, purely formal systems which refuse to define their object independently of their explanations can only be assessed 'in relation to one another on formal grounds: the best theory is that which is simplest, most elegant', or whatever (p. 137). On this basis the literary theory of Thomas Rymer might be judged superior to that of Coleridge, or Henry James. The corollary of a purely formal system, however, is that 'the isolation of the theory from the world of observation means that the theory has no purchase on reality' (*ibid.*).

The unsatisfying nature of Current Literary Theory, I conclude, is that while being an *a priori* construct, largely made up of the negations of other theories, and while continuing to parrot the 60s iconoclasts in scorning empiricism, it still claims to be telling us something about the world.

What the theorists' pronouncements about decentred discourses, expelled subjects, absent presence, or non-referential sign-systems are in fact proving is the accuracy of an observation made by W.G. Runciman, both a theoretical and practising sociologist, namely that 'there is in practice no escape for either the natural or the social scientist from a correspondence conception of truth', for to assert that any proposition is true (or not) 'is to presuppose a relation of some kind between observation-statements and the state of the world', and therefore to employ a concept of truth (Runciman 1983, p. 8). This condition holds for all the assertions of Derrida, Foucault and their followers, despite their attempts to evade accountability, about the nature of language, the incoherence of works of literature, and every other position either excoriated or recommended. Despite their attacks on objectivity, that concept remains inescapable in the human sciences, provided that it is properly understood. A.D. Nuttall recently wrote of the criterion of 'objective truth', that if it is taken to mean "truth which . . . states itself, without regard to the nature and interests of the perceiver", then we could rightly reject it as superseded.

If, on the other hand, 'objective truth' means 'truth which is founded on some characteristic of the material and is not invented by the perceiver', there is no reason whatever to say that [it] has been superseded. Indeed its supersession would mean the end of all human discourse, not just Newtonian physics but even *Tel Quel*. Objective atomism is dead but objectivity is unrefuted. (Nuttall 1983, p. 12)

Or, as Francis Bacon put it, 'God forgive that we should give out a dream of our own imagination for a pattern of the world' (*Works*, 4. 32-3).

Following through the history of the iconoclastic movement and its opponents since the 1960s it is heartening to see so much agreement between critics of very different training and background on its attempt to offload any notion of empiricism. To the Marxist classicist Sebastiano Timpanaro, the system-breakers, from Bachelard and Lévi-Strauss to Foucault and Derrida, merely managed 'to blur together under the pejorative label of "empirical" both "lived experience" in the irrationalist sense and the "experimental"'. They made an *a priori* definition of science 'as anti-empiricism, as pure theory', ignoring its function as 'knowledge related to action through a process of reciprocal verification' (Timpanaro 1975, p. 186), a fundamental mistake. Another Marxist critic, Perry Anderson, has commented on the way Derrida and Foucault took up 'the philosophical legacy of the late Nietzsche, in its relentless denunciation of the illusion of truth and the fixity of meaning', trying to escape from 'the tyranny of the veridical' towards 'a free-wheeling nescience' (Anderson 1983, pp. 46-7), glorying in a state beyond meaning or verification. Yet, he responds, 'without untruth truth ceases to be such', indeed 'the distinction between the true and the false is the uneliminable premise of any rational knowledge. Its central site is evidence', a related concept disdained by struc-

turalism and its successors, which claimed the licence to indulge in 'a play of signification beyond truth and falsehood' (p. 48). Evidence is particularly important in the historical sciences, however: as E.D. Hirsch points out, in their domain 'decisive, falsifying data cannot be generated at will', as in the natural sciences, so that the interpreter is often faced with the choice between two hypotheses, each having some evidence to support it (Hirsch 1967, p. 181).

* * *

For works of literature, to return to our main interest, the evidence cited derives from the text, which needs to have been accurately edited — a supposedly 'factual' scholarly procedure, but which depends on all kind of interpretive hypotheses, including ideological ones (but that is another story). Secondly, citations from the text need to respect its overall meaning, and to reproduce the author's argument reliably. As I showed in Chapter 4, Greenblatt regularly misrepresents the texts he cites, in order (I surmised) to justify a New Historicist *ressentiment*. Although literary criticism has its own procedures, it shares with other subjects in the humanities a responsibility to describe the objects it studies accurately, as the first stage of interpretation. W.G. Runciman's outstanding study of social theory has identified some recurring instances of 'misdescription' which can be used to sum up several of the failings I have documented in current Shakespeare criticism. Runciman divides misdescription into 'misapprehension', involving 'incompleteness, oversimplification and ahistoricity'; and 'mystification', involving 'suppression, exaggeration, and ethnocentricity' (Runciman 1983, pp. 244-9). *Incompleteness* arises from an observer neglecting 'an aspect of the institutions and practices of the society he is studying which is only peripheral to his own theoretical interests but is of much closer significance to "them"'. *Oversimplification* is seen when the researcher fails to realise that 'the beliefs and practices connected with the behaviour' he describes 'are more complex than his account of it' would suggest. Social anthropology guards against this failing by developing 'systematic participant-observation as the basic technique'. *Ahistoricity* arises when the researcher forgets that a report on 'the behaviour of the members of an earlier society' may be accurate but 'will be a misdescription if so presented as to imply that they were capable of conceptualizing their own experiences to themselves in the idiom of a later one'.

These were instances of 'misapprehension'. The first mode of 'mystification' is *suppression*, the researcher's deliberately failing to 'include reports which would make the description which he presents less favourable to his chosen cause'. *Exaggeration*, likewise, 'typically arises when the researcher overstates a description to make a case for purposes of his own'. *Ethnocentricity*, finally, 'arises where the assumptions of the observer's own

period or milieu are read into the experience of the members of another in which they do not in fact have any place'. This is particularly likely when the description concerns that earlier society's values, when, for instance, the modern historian applies to them his 'own taken-for-granted distinction between the natural and the supernatural' — or, we can add, a modern notion of witches as marginalised and therefore admirable people. Without going into detail, I think the reader will recall instances of all six of Runciman's categories of misdescription in the Shakespeare critics I have discussed. Less specific, but rather similar criteria for interpretation, as we have seen, were suggested by E.D. Hirsch (legitimacy, correspondence, generic appropriateness, coherence), and S.M. Olsen (completeness, correctness, comprehensiveness, consistence, and discrimination).

Although the literary critic is dealing not with societies, past or present, but with literary works, the same criteria apply, in particular the need to recognise the specificity or individuality of a play or novel, the fact that it has a unique dynamic structure, a growth, complication and resolution of conflicting forces that is different from every other work (unless they belong to the type of *Trivalliteratur* written to a formula, when a description can be made of the genre as a whole). Given the potential uniqueness, at least, of every literary work, it follows that interpretation should begin at the beginning. Not in the sense that the critic's written account must always start with Act One, scene one, but that his reading should begin there, and the resulting interpretation should recognise the fact that every action has its consequences, and that to understand these it is necessary first to understand the action, the motives behind it, whether or not it was an initiating act or one in reply to, or in retaliation for, some preceding act. Drama, like life as Kierkegaard once defined it, is lived forwards but understood backwards, in retrospect. Plays certainly need to be experienced forwards, as evolving out of clearly-defined human desires and their fulfilment or frustration. The first scene of *King Lear*, the first scene of *Othello*, are decisive for the subsequent events and their outcome. For a critic to start her account of the latter play with Iago's hypocritical words to Othello, 'I am your own forever' (3.3.476), or for another to base a reading of *Coriolanus* on two brief passages taken out of context is to forfeit any chance of understanding it properly.

Equally, the evidence that a critic draws on concerning the play's individual structure involves him in reliably registering the various levels of plot, and how they interact. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, for instance, Shakespeare organises four layers of plot in parallel. First, the impending marriage of Theseus and Hippolyta, 'four happy days' off when the play begins (1.1.2). Secondly, the dispute between Egeus and his daughter Hermia, supposed to marry Demetrius but in love with Lysander. (Fortunately Helena loves Demetrius, and after various comic mistakes both couples achieve their desires.) Thirdly, the dispute between the King and Queen of the fairies, which Oberon resolves to his advantage with the help

of a herb that makes Titania fall in love with Bottom. Fourthly, the company of artisans rehearsing their play of Pyramus and Thisbe, duly performed before the concluding nuptials (5.1). The artisans' role is to entertain the court, and in rehearsing their play (1.2; 3.1; 4.2) they certainly entertain the audience (some Cultural Materialists apart). Their leading performer is Bottom, the only (human) character to figure in more than two plot-levels (the fairy Puck takes part in all four), in those touchingly comic but gentle love-scenes with Titania and the fairies (3.1; 4.1). Any attentive reader can see how skilfully Shakespeare sustains these four plot-elements in parallel, bringing them all to a happy resolution in Acts 4 and 5. As we know from the studies of G.K. Hunter and David P. Young, among others, by a process of analysis and synthesis Shakespeare fused a number of disparate elements together to form an admirably balanced unity.⁶

For some recent politically minded critics, however, the truly significant element in the play is that involving the artisans — not for its connection with the illusion basic to theatrical performance (which Theseus discusses in a famous speech), but for its relevance to immediate social unrest. In a recent book, *Shakespeare and the Popular Voice* (Oxford, 1989), Annabel Patterson has argued that the play should be interpreted in the light of the Oxfordshire Rising of 1596 and the midsummer disturbances in London of 1595, which some sources claim to have involved up to a thousand rioters, a mixture of artisans and apprentices. Terence Hawkes reviewed Patterson's book favourably,⁷ endorsing her notion that the artisans in the *Dream* offered to Shakespeare's audience 'the worrying potential of the presence on the stage of a number of such persons', Bottom's 'sexual triumph with Titania' constituting 'an enactment in fantasy of upper-class fears regarding the potency of the lower elements both of society and the body'. The artisans' play is now 'thrust into new prominence', as Hawkes puts it, for their 'mocking and sharply focused performance — capable of making its aristocratic audience as uncomfortable as the performance of "The Mousetrap" does in *Hamlet* — takes up virtually the whole of the Fifth Act of the play, and the rehearsals for it resonate in the rest of the action to such a degree that they drown out much of the rather tedious framing plot'.

This may be a demonstration of turning the margin into the centre, but it certainly distorts the play. There is no evidence that the grievances of some working men in 1595–6 are echoed in this or any other play by Shakespeare. His presentations of social unrest (*2 Henry VI*, *Julius Caesar*, *Coriolanus*) derive from historical sources, and are never keyed to contemporary events. Far from airing their grievances, these craftsmen are entirely preoccupied with their play and with the aesthetics of illusion, only lamenting Bottom's loss of a royal pension by his apparent disappearance ('An' the Duke had not given him sixpence a day for playing Pyramus, I'll be hanged': 4.2.19ff). Bottom's 'sexual triumph with Titania'

is a figment in the minds of some post-Kottian critics, and fails to register the comic incongruity of the love-scenes themselves, with Titania oozing love-poetry over Bottom, while he remains, *semper idem*, imperturbable in prose. The performance of *Pyramus and Thisbe* can hardly be described as 'sharply focused', either, given the hilarious series of mishaps that befall it, compounded by the actors' artless commentary. Their play becomes even funnier if we accept, as Thomas Clayton recently suggested, that a whole series of unconscious *sous-entendres* are perpetrated by Wall.⁸ If we imagine that Wall presents his 'crannied hole or chink' not, as is customary, with outstretched fingers, but with parted legs, so that the lovers have to exchange kisses between his legs, then a completely coherent series of bawdy jokes emerges ('And this the cranny is, right and sinister, / Through which the fearful lovers are to whisper'; 'O wicked wall, through whom I see no bliss! / Curs'd be thy stones for thus deceiving me!'; 'My cherry lips have often kiss'd thy stones, / Thy stones with lime and hair knot up in thee'; 'O kiss me through the hole of this vile wall!' — 'I kiss the wall's hole, not your lips at all': 5.1.153ff). The gain in comic incongruity by that interpretation (giving meaning to some lines which otherwise seemed pointless) is so great that it would be a pity to ignore it.

Whether or not readers and producers come to accept that new reading, it is obvious that the artisans' play is by every other criterion comic, a parody of outdated verse style, absurd diction, and wooden dramaturgy. Hawkes's parallel with 'The Mousetrap' in *Hamlet* could hardly be less appropriate, if we recall the subject-matter of that play, 'the image of a murder done in Vienna . . . a knavish piece of work', and its intended (and successful) effect on Claudius. Far from being made 'uncomfortable' by the playlet, Theseus and his courtiers keep up a rapid-fire series of deflating comments which are sometimes amusing. The crowning gesture in Hawkes's attempt to appropriate the play for a political reading, his claim that the artisans' rehearsals 'resonate' so strongly that 'they drown out much of the rather tedious framing plot', is another example of the ruthlessness involved in ideological interpretation these days, the seizing of that part of the play which fits your preoccupation and the contemptuous disposal of the rest. I should once like to see a performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* either with an audience comprised wholly of Cultural Materialists (if a theatre large enough could be found), and with normal actors, or else one with the Cultural Materialists playing the main roles, and with a normal audience — to see which group could make the other laugh in the way that the play intends. Although I fear that this misinterpretation would be the death of its comedy, perhaps Hawkes as Bottom could show us how this reading could make sense in the play. ('No offence, Hal, no offence'.) Patterson believes that the play's audience is faced with the dilemma of whether or not to join with the aristocrats in their mockery of the artisans. But I wonder how else one could respond, for instance, to Thisbe's lamenting *blason* of Pyramus: 'These lily lips, / This

cherry nose, / These yellow cowslip cheeks, / Are gone, are gone! / . . . His eyes were green as leeks' (5.1.321ff). As Horace put it, *spectatum admissum teneatis, amici?*: 'if you were asked to see such a thing, could you help laughing, my friends?' (*Ars poetica*, 5). This partial reading of the play, trying to appropriate it for a politico-social ideology, exemplifies all the vices of misdescription that our sociologist identified: incompleteness, oversimplification, ahistoricity, suppression, exaggeration, and ethnocentricity. Ethnocentricity and ahistoricity are also, as we have abundantly seen, the defining marks of Freudian and (old-style) feminist criticism, from which the other faults soon follow.

* * *

Shakespeare criticism needs to take stock of the ideologies and systems to which it passively attaches itself: that much, I hope, has become clear. It has taken over elements from the general intellectual upheaval dating from the 1960s without reflecting on the methodological consequences of following Foucault, Althusser, or whoever. In absorbing their polemical attitudes to previous philosophies or systems, each group of literary critics today finds itself in opposition not just to all past Shakespeare critics but also to every other group working now. The result, as several experienced commentators have noticed, is an atmosphere of fragmentation and rivalry. The historian Gertrude Himmelfarb observes that, 'for all of the brave talk about interdisciplinary studies, scholarship has never been as factional and parochial as it is today' (Himmelfarb 1987, p. 100). The critic and historian of criticism, Denis Donoghue, adapting a phrase from Wallace Stevens ('the lunatic of one idea'), writes that 'literary critics of our time are lunatics of one idea, and . . . are celebrated in the degree of the ferocity with which they enforce it' (Donoghue 1981, pp. 205–6). Donoghue chooses Kenneth Burke rather than Derrida, for instance, 'because I prefer to live in conditions as far as possible free, unprescribed, undogmatic. Burke would let me practice a mind of my own; Derrida would not' (p. 206). Derrida forces a choice on us, Donoghue writes,

because he has a quarrel on his hands; he feels alien to the whole tradition of metaphysics. So he has driven himself into a corner, the fanatic of one idea. So far as he has encouraged other critics to join him there, turning an attitude into an institution; he has ignored the fact that, as Blackmur has said, 'the hysteria of institutions is more dreadful than that of individuals'. So is the fanaticism. What we make, thus driven, is an ideology, the more desperate because it can only suppress what it opposes; or try to suppress it. (p. 207)

A younger commentator on recent developments in literary criticism sees them as a series of 'competing orientations, each claiming to produce a more radical break with past conventions than the others'. This struggle to

get out in front of the field has established irritable disagreement as the norm: 'the peevishness of critical debate in literary studies today can sometimes seem absurdly out of proportion to what is finally at stake' (Wayne 1987, p. 57). What is at stake, though, is a whole range of cultural goods: egos, careers, identities, the supremacy of one's group.

The basic problem in current criticism, as I see it, is that many critics cannot experience — or at any rate, professionally discuss — a play or novel 'direct', in itself. They have to impose between themselves and it a template, an interpretive model, some kind of 'enchanted glass', in Bacon's striking phrase. But what that yields, once the reading has been performed, is not the play but the template, illustrated or validated by the play. All that such readings prove, as Crews puts it, 'is that any thematic stencil will make its own pattern stand out' (Crews 1986, p. 173). This felt need for a guide or model can be found in much criticism over the last fifty years. What is new is the desire for collective templates, each group wanting its own magic glass to screen out material irrelevant to its own concerns and give back a reduced, but still clearly discernible mirror of itself, which other users can then reproduce in still smaller forms (the technique known as the 'mise en abyme', a term from heraldry, as Hillis Miller points out).⁹ Each group appropriates that part of the work that echoes its own interests, and discards the rest. As Wendell Harris recently observed, in a quite matter-of-fact way, critical groups naturally select those works that can best exhibit 'the power of their approach'. Deconstructionists like texts that can be 'pried open to suggest gaping contradictions', neo-Marxists and New Historicists like texts that 'can be shown to reveal unsuspected workings of political power. Practiced New Critics, deconstructionists, and Marxists', he added, with no sense of impropriety or incongruity, 'can, of course, *read almost any text in a way that supports their own allegiances . . .*' (Harris 1991, p. 116; my italics). To one critic that's just how things are; to others it could signify the denial of literary criticism. Edward Said asserts the contrary principle that

criticism modified in advance by labels like 'Marxism' or 'liberalism' is, in my view, an oxymoron. The history of thought, to say nothing of political movements, is extravagantly illustrative of how the dictum 'solidarity before criticism' means the end of criticism. (Said 1983, p. 28)

Recent developments in the world of letters certainly bear out that verdict.

One result of the politicisation of literary criticism is that readers now cannot afford to be unaware of the groupings, and the polemical techniques that each uses to advance its own cause and frustrate its enemies'. (A knowledge of rhetoric is useful.) One popular ploy has been to pronounce a critical approach or methodology that you disapprove of 'dead', or 'finished'. As Thomas Pavel has shrewdly observed, 'The Rhetoric of the End' is a metaphor recently 'much used and abused' to declare that its user 'is in a position — or at least a posture — of power' (Pavel 1989, p. 9). In

claiming that an era is over, such narratives perform an aggressive act, for to 'conceptualize the end' of a period — or 'the entire metaphysical tradition' — amounts to inflicting an ontological degradation on the sequence supposedly ended, relegating it, through rhetorical artifice, to the level of passive narrative material . . .'. If used 'from within history and about history, the notion of an end points less to a fact than to a *desire*; far from achieving a real closure, it instead opens a polemic' (*ibid.*). In simple vernacular terms it means 'drop dead! Make room for me.' A variant of this ploy was Lévi-Strauss's appropriating Saussure's notion of the arbitrariness of the linguistic sign for structuralist anthropology and relegating everything pre-Saussure to a 'pre-scientific limbo' (p. 10). The first of the categorically assertive Modern Masters, Lévi-Strauss (as Pavel records) never subjected 'the validity of the models adopted . . . to doubt or to systematic research' (p. 11), simply asserting their necessity in what Frederick Crews describes as 'the Parisian manner of stating the most high-handed claims as if they were self-evident' (Crews 1986, p. 149). This assertive technique can be seen very clearly in all the work of de Man.

Despite their claim to modernity, contemporaneity, or whatever, these polemical strategies hark back to a much older and cruder thought-world. As Pavel brings out, 'for Lévi-Strauss to label his adversaries "pre-scientific" was tantamount to pronouncing a symbolic death-sentence, to marking out their narrative end' and the advent of his new regime in anthropology (Pavel 1989, p. 11). This was not so much a scientific gesture, however, as a magical or religious one,

such is the force of excommunicative utterances. To proclaim the end of other groups and systems exorcizes the fear of having to confront them. . . . When the rhetoricians of scientific salvation announce the end of the infidels, they disguise the desire to annihilate the adversary and ensure complete mastery. . . . (pp. 11, 13)

Thus Derrida's placing of Rousseau in 'ethnocentric Western ontotheology', another commentator observes, 'amounted to an impeachment, for Derrida's bracketing is the equivalent of a casting out or a death sentence' (McFadden 1981, p. 339). The primitive nature of such expulsions is well described in Ernest Gellner's comment that in 'pre-scientific societies' — this is now an ethnographic description, not a dismissal —

Truth is manifested for the approved members of the society, and the question of its validation is not posed, or posed in a blatantly circular manner (the theory itself singles out the fount of authority, which then blesses the theory). Those who deviate, on the other hand, are *possessed* by evil forces, and they need to be exorcized rather than refuted. (Gellner 1985, p. 120)

It is only in modern 'technological/industrial society', Gellner adds, 'the only society ever to be based on sustained cognitive growth, that this kind of procedure has become unacceptable' (*ibid.*).

Unacceptable indeed, but disturbingly prevalent in Current Literary Theory, which has developed a distinctly authoritarian streak. As S.M. Olsen has shown, such theory now 'represents a form of theoretical imperialism', in that 'conflicts between theories, or more often conflicts between sceptical critics with no supporters of some special theory' turn into an 'ideological struggle' between incompatible value-systems.

If one rejects conclusions yielded by a Marxist or psychoanalytic theory of literature one is blinded by a bourgeois ideology or by psychological defence mechanisms which will not permit one to recognize things as they really are. Protesting against the unreasonableness of deconstructionist readings, one is accused of being a liberal humanist who feels his individuality threatened. (Olsen 1987, p. 203)

In this respect, then, Current Literary Theory 'is authoritarian in a way that theories of the natural sciences are not' (*ibid.*). E.P. Thompson described Stalinism as a doctrine which 'blocks all exits from its system by defining in advance any possible exit as "bourgeois"' (Thompson 1978, p. 133), and several Marxist critics produced many examples of Althusser using this ploy. Demonisation (the first stage to exorcism) of the adversary is now a cliché of literary polemics. For A.D. Nuttall 'the most typical vice' of twentieth-century ideological criticism is the abuse of 'undercutting' explanations, setting down an opponent's weaknesses as being determined by psychological or social factors, hoping to neutralise the opposition 'by ascribing to such explanations an absolute, exhaustive efficacy' (Nuttall 1983, p. 7). True enough, when Nuttall's book was mentioned by one Cultural Materialist he described it as 'espous[ing] a positivistic conservative materialism which rejects the specificity of history . . .' (Drakakis 1985, p. 16). Or, in the vulgar, 'he's not for us, so we are against him'. Such ritual labelling of the adversary risks creating its own version of those despised attributes of a previous generation, 'essentialism' (Graff 1989, p. 174), and 'totalization' (Thomas 1989, p. 200). They become, that is, mechanical gestures of abuse.

Abuse and defamation are, however, things that commentators on the cultural scene nowadays must learn to live with. The republic of letters, or the academy, is now leased out — I write pronouncing it — to a host of competing groups, engaged in the old practices of epideictic rhetoric, *laus* and *vituperatio*: praise for oneself, scorn for the others. One exponent of literary theory asserts that in the coming age it will 'play the central role' in literary studies (*cit.* Merquior 1986a, p. 246). J. Hillis Miller, then President of the Modern Language Association of America, was more insistent. Celebrating 'the triumph of theory' with a hypnotic repetition of that phrase, and engaging the rival Marxists in close-quarter combat, Miller asserted that 'the future of literary studies depends on maintaining and developing . . . "deconstruction"' (Miller 1987, p. 289). For

deconstruction and literary theory are the only way to respond to the actual conditions — cultural, economic, institutional, and technological — within which literary study is carried out today. . . . Theory is essential to going forward in humanistic study today. (p. 250)

And so on through many more 'onlys'. But of course the Marxists have a different version. For Fredric Jameson, as we have seen, 'only Marxism' can offer what we need, since the Marxist perspective 'is the absolute horizon of all reading and all interpretation', and constitutes 'something like an ultimate semantic precondition for the intelligibility of literary and cultural texts' (Jameson 1981, pp. 17, 75). None of these advocates is lacking in self-confidence.

Which of them shall we believe? Each makes a claim for our attention — no, for our total and absorbing involvement in their discipline before, or indeed to the exclusion of, all others. For Norman N. Holland, veteran Freudian campaigner,

the fantasy psychoanalysis discovers at the core of a literary work has a special status in our mental life that moral, medieval, or Marxist ideas do not. These are conscious and adult and intellectual. Fantasies are unconscious, infantile, and fraught with emotion. Fantasies are what make us grab somebody by the lapels. Ideas do so only if they are the later representatives of fantasy. The crucial point, then, . . . is: the psychoanalytic meaning underlies all the others. (*cit.* Olsen 1987, p. 204)

In other words, fantasies are the first and best, moreover the source from which all other forms of thought develop. Close your Marx, open your Freud. In the struggle to gain, and keep our attention what matters is less logical argument than force of utterance, insistence, emphasis. On behalf of the feminists hear Ann Thompson:

It is important for feminist critics to intervene in every way in the reading and interpretation of Shakespeare and to establish, even more securely than they have already done, that their approach is not just another choice among a plurality of modes of reading, not something that can be relegated to an all-woman ghetto, but a major new perspective that must eventually inform *all* readings. (Thompson 1988, p. 84)

* * *

Given such intense jockeying for attention, each group trying to gain and retain that portion of the intellectual space that seems theirs by right, quarrels are inevitable. The feminists, for instance, have fallen out with the New Historicists. The burden of their complaint might be summed up in that line from Browning's 'Lost Leader': 'Just for a handful of silver he

left us'. Whereas American feminists had hoped for an alliance with this new wave, their one-time allies in the fight against the establishment soon turned out to be making a new establishment, and furthermore a male enclave of their own. Peter Erickson, writing in 1987, reported — and it is a revealing comment on the febrile intensity with which cultural-political movements are discussed in American universities that he could write the chronicle of a three-year time-span — that 'by the mid-nineteen-eighties both feminist criticism and new historicism had . . . entered a transitional stage marked by uncertainty, growing pains, internal disagreement, and reassessment' (Erickson 1987, p. 330). At a seminar on 'Gender and Power' in the 1985 meeting of the World Shakespeare Conference (in West Berlin), apparently, 'the notion of collaboration quickly broke down', an 'impasse' emerging over the relative importance of gender. Feminists attacked the New Historicists for being 'more interested in power relations between men than between the sexes', and for not acknowledging the 'absolutely central' position of gender (p. 329). The dispute is a political one — in the current sense of 'cultural politics' as the activity of self-constituted critical groups — and is rather parochial, if extremely bitter. Erickson accuses New Historicism of abusing its 'capacity to confer legitimacy', sacrificing 'intellectual integrity' to its 'territorial imperative' (p. 329). Another feminist, Lynda E. Boose, has complained that New Historicists are exclusively involved with 'the absolutist court and its strategies of male power' (Boose 1987, p. 731), choosing cultural texts 'to privilege over the literary one[s]' that are all the same, 'male-authored — hierarchical — patriarchal' (p. 732). A feminist colleague, Carol Neely, accuses them of 're-producing patriarchy' and dooming women to silence (Neely 1988, p. 7 — few readers will have noticed much silence in American feminism). The New Historicists' desire for mastery, Neely alleges, can be seen in their continuing 'focus on the single and most visible center of power, the monarch', a choice that may attempt to conceal but in fact reveals 'the widespread cultural anxiety about marriage, women, female sexuality and power engendered by the women's movement and feminist criticism' (p. 15). — 'To the court of King James!' then becomes the password for a male group fleeing the women up in arms.

The New Historicists have defended themselves, of course, or proclaimed their innocence.¹⁰ To some readers these group-disputes will seem tedious, and they may feel like exclaiming, with Mercutio, 'a plague on both your houses!' But anyone concerned with the present, and more important, the future of Shakespeare criticism must take note of them. The danger is that collective animus can reach the point where a group 'targets' anyone who evaluates their work by independent criteria as an enemy, a person of no worth or merit, whose motives can only be of the most dubious kind. Such enemies are obviously 'possessed by evil forces', as Gellner describes the opponents stigmatised in pre-scientific societies, and 'need to be exorcized rather than refuted'. That my diagnosis is actual, not

hypothetical, nor hysterical, can be seen from the reaction to Richard Levin's essay on 'Feminist Thematics and Shakespearean Tragedy', which I drew on in Chapter 6 (above, pp. 366ff). This is a challenging but fair and properly documented analysis of a dozen or so recent books and essays, in which Levin showed that some feminists tend to impose their own beliefs about gender on to the tragedies, indicting the main male characters as patriarchal misogynists whose (usually insecure) masculinity is the source of the tragic catastrophe. Levin's essay appeared in *PMLA* for March, 1988. A correspondent in the October issue complained that the readings offered by Levin (and by the feminists) were 'partial', that is, both 'incomplete' and 'partial' in the sense of taking a position on one side of the gender divide' (p. 818).¹¹ (This is a new, and I feel, disastrous use of the word: if we are all doomed to be stuck on 'one side of the gender divide' rational debate becomes impossible.) The correspondent concluded that 'masculinity is a malady. It is the gender, not the sex, that is the problem' (*ibid.*). In reply Levin objected to the feminists' claim to possess 'a key to all human behaviour', in which the 'cause of the masculine malady' is located in men's 'infantile experience with mothering', or even (in a recent feminist reading of *Coriolanus*), in 'their fetal tissue' (!). The problem, then, 'may be sex and not gender after all, and biology can once more become destiny, but this time only for the men' — a sad prospect, many would feel. Levin ended by congratulating *PMLA* (which has given much space to feminist criticism in recent years) for having published his article in the first place.

But that amicable conclusion was short-lived, for the issue of January 1989 included a truly virulent letter signed by no less than twenty-four feminists.¹² Rather than applauding *PMLA*, the writers indignantly queried why it had 'chosen to print a tired, muddled, unsophisticated essay that is blind at once to the assumptions of feminist criticism of Shakespeare and to its own' (p. 78). From pure abuse the writers moved on to *ad hominem* arguments, professing to be 'puzzled and disturbed that Richard Levin has made a successful academic career by using the reductive techniques of this essay to bring the same predictable charges indiscriminately against all varieties of contemporary criticism'. Such indiscriminate smears debase themselves, of course, but for the record, Levin's work includes many studies of Renaissance drama besides his analyses of the distorting and deadening effects of some unexamined assumptions in contemporary literary criticism. The validity of such analyses is unquestionable, and I would sturdily support him in the words of Dr. Johnson: 'he who refines the public taste is a public benefactor'.

Rather than advancing the debate, the twenty-four signatories of this letter simply repeat the strategy I noted above (p. 359) of saying that in attacking women men are merely attacking their own weaknesses. Only instead of Shakespeare's men being guilty of this it is now Richard Levin, whose critique 'embodies precisely those terms it falsely accuses

feminist critics of: arbitrary selectivity, reductive thematizing, misplaced causality. . . . Accusing us of his own flaws, Levin paternally tries to preempt our strengths. . . . The writers claim that Levin focussed on 'early work' by feminists: but the essays and books he analyses range from 1975 to 1986; they accuse him of ignoring or mislabelling the work of seven critics: but five of those are in his bibliography; and they claim he 'privileges his favored genre, tragedy', where he merely set out to discuss feminist readings of Shakespearean tragedy, of which there are now a great many (so who's privileging what?).

The writers' indignation shows that they are really concerned with the contemporary political issue, expressing 'the serious concerns about inequality and justice that have engendered feminist analyses of literature'. What they seem unable to realise is that other women, and other men, may share those concerns but still feel that their polemical expression in literary criticism can only produce a distorted reading of literature from the past, which is held up to blame for the ills of the present. There is no sign in this letter of that self-examination or re-thinking of premisses and assumptions which Levin's essay could have provoked. These feminist apologists still denounce (in 1989) 'the strategies, structures, psychologies, and oppressiveness of the domination that particular male characters [in Shakespeare] enact'. Their critical work, they claim, has analysed the behaviour of tragic heroes, whose 'abnormal behavior in crisis' still represents 'the values and contradictions of their societies', and who 'often fantasize "a very serious provocation by a woman" when there is none. . . .' (pp. 77-8). The quoted remark is Levin's comment on how some of Shakespeare's male characters (he cites Hamlet, Othello, Lear, and Antony) express 'misogynist feelings at certain times, but always in situations of crisis and always in response to what they view as a very serious provocation by a woman'. By omitting Levin's careful delimitation of his statement, and by adding on the qualification 'when there is none', the four-and-twenty signatories of this letter falsify both the critic and the plays, and merely repeat the distortion to which Levin originally referred; the imposition of misogyny as a standard personality trait which is not only untrue to the characters concerned but erodes their individuality, giving them all 'the same stereotypical male sickness'. It is the men, the men who are to blame. (It is time that some feminists caught up with recent theoretical advances in their discipline.)

* * *

There is no need to summarise Levin's reply, which is in the public domain. The one point I pick out is his observation that the writers of the letter evidently want PMLA 'to deny publication to any criticism of them that they disapprove of' (p. 79). Any right-minded reader will agree with Levin that a journal which thinks of itself as being open to debate cannot

be 'subject to the veto of any group'. That would be to close off critical exchange, and human dialogue, from the outset. Not that Levin expects (any more than I do) to

convince the signers or others who share their feelings. For them, critiques of feminist criticism are permissible from within the fold. . . . but not from 'a cultural other'. (*ibid.*)

This is surely the most depressing aspect of the current situation, the belief that no outsider has the right to criticise the group, that this right belongs exclusively to members of the group — who would risk, however, being expelled from it. . . . That way lies chauvinism, wars of religion, persecution.

Levin's reply did not, of course, settle the issue, which raged on in the press, on panel meetings at further conferences, and in print.¹³ In the next instalment, delivered at another MLA meeting in January 1990 and recently published, Levin and various critics exchanged further arguments (Kamps 1992, pp. 15-60). Addressing the dilemma of the politicisation in literary studies that so many commentators have been deploring, where 'each approach is confined to its own hermeneutically sealed-off discursive space, and adherents of different approaches can only discourse with each other about the politics of their respective ideologies' (*ibid.*, p. 19), Levin proposed a peace treaty based on the triple principles of objectivism, rationalism, and pluralism. By objectivism he means the ability to attain knowledge of a literary text without the resulting interpretation being 'always determined by the interpreter's ideology' (p. 16). By rationalism he means the possibility that 'rival ideologists in their attempt to persuade can invoke rational standards that are themselves not ideological' (p. 20) — otherwise, one would imagine, the automatic rejection of the other group's arguments on the ground of ideology would result in a true *dialogue des sourds*. And by pluralism Levin means the belief that various critical approaches can attain knowledge valid in their own terms, not positing 'a necessary connection between these approaches and political ideologies', yet allowing us 'to live together and talk to each other because we can understand and respect our different approaches' (p. 18). Pluralism 'can be suppressed in favor of monism, which is its only alternative' (p. 20), but modern political history makes us all too aware of how damaging that would be.

I personally welcome Levin's suggestions as moderate, lucidly argued, not attempting to appropriate a larger or better furnished space in the contemporary scene. But in the present climate all peace treaties seem doomed. As Levin shows, Marxists reject pluralism as a 'formalist fallacy' since 'they are not seeking peace but victory. They do not want Marxism to be regarded as one among several valid approaches; they want it to be the *only* valid approach, as can be seen in their frequent references to it as "scientific" (which means all other approaches are unscientific). . . .'

(pp. 18–19). Both Marxists and feminists attack reason and rationality as the *ignes fatui* of previous unenlightened generations, but they also denounce 'self-contradiction' and 'irrationality', which shows they do apply rational standards still, perhaps without knowing it (pp. 20, 52–3). Both groups display what Levin calls

the genetic fallacy, which claims that our views of the world are caused by our race, gender, class, and similar factors, and that they therefore must be judged on the basis of those causes. But both of these claims are false. Our views may often be influenced by such factors, but are not necessarily determined by them. If they were, there would be no male feminists, or female anti-feminists, no bourgeois radicals or proletarian reactionaries. . . . (p. 54)

The diversity of human temperaments and persuasions is far greater than these deterministic models would allow. But 'even if our views were caused by these factors', Levin adds, 'it does not follow that they must be judged on that basis' (*ibid.*): this would simply divide the world into the lowest common denominators of gender, class, age, and judge their products accordingly. The principle at issue here is one emphasised by a number of the writers with whom I am happy to be aligned — Ernest Gellner, E.P. Thompson, Frederick Crews, W.G. Runciman, Simon Clarke, Edward Said — that in all intellectual debates there must be reference points independent of the participants' biographical situation or ideological adherence. If there are no criteria for evaluating methodology, the use of evidence, procedures of argument, the truth or falsity of the conclusions, then intellectual pursuits become impossible, and unnecessary. Truth will simply be handed down from those in power, while the rest of us acquiesce in its dissemination. Who would want to live in such a world?

The politicisation of discourse means that disagreements are regularly reduced, as A.D. Nuttall and Sten Olsen observed, to some putative underlying motive, psychological (the critic reveals his own 'anxiety'), or political. In his original essay, as he recalls, Levin criticised those feminists' formalist readings of Shakespeare's tragedies because 'some of them ignored parts of the text that did not fit their thesis' (p. 55). The relevant response would have been for them, whether as a group or as individuals, to show either that they did not ignore the part in question or that it really did fit the thesis. Instead, as we have seen, a whole battery of bitter *ad hominem* arguments were ranged against Levin, and continue to be: one respondent argued that his article should have been denied publication because he 'failed to understand the feminist cause'.¹⁴ Levin retorts that he does in fact support feminism but that 'a just cause cannot justify interpretive faults' (*ibid.*). The larger issue is this new tendency in ideology-dominated discourse, the 'defensive move from criticism to politics'. Whoever takes the new ideologues to task for some unsatisfactory critical interpretation is instantly accused of sexist bias, or any of the other

demonised labels (essentialist-liberal-humanist-bourgeois. . .). But this self-protective tactic has damaging effects: 'Marxists and feminists seem to claim a special privilege for their approaches, on political grounds, that grants immunity from the kind of scrutiny to which other approaches are subjected and so would amount to a denial of pluralism', which would mean in turn that only members of a group could criticise other members (pp. 55–6). And the result of this intra-group disagreement, as one feminist complains, is that that movement is now 'split into factions' (p. 57).

These are the depressing but predictable results of the slogan that Edward Said excoriated, 'solidarity before criticism'. The survival of any intellectual discipline depends on there being some external terms of reference by which it can be judged, a language which is comprehensible to those outside the group, a community at large that can evaluate achievements. The alternative is already visible around us, the inbreeding of Derridians, Lacanians, Foucauldians, Althusserians, unable and unwilling to understand any one else's language or concerns. It can be seen in so many places in current Shakespeare criticism, as groups align themselves and polarise the scene into an us/them division. The last instance of polarisation that I shall cite, which also expresses a satisfied feeling of group-consensus, having rejected alternative views as pre-scientific, imperialistic ('add demons here', as one of the ancient magical recipes would say), is Howard Felperin's recent description of the new, or 'current' view of *The Tempest*. Felperin describes the change as having taken place since the mid-1970s, when 'anti-authoritarian, anti-elitist, and anti-aesthetic doctrines were in the wind in a recently politicized academia'. The resulting change to our perception of this play, as he phrases it in a series of (I take it, ironic) rhetorical questions, is absolute, canonical:

What Shakespearean now would be oblivious or audacious enough to discuss *The Tempest*. . . from any critical standpoint other than a historicist or feminist, or more specifically, a post-colonial position? Would anyone be so foolhardy as to concentrate on the so-called 'aesthetic dimension' of the play? To dote thus on such luggage would be to risk being demonized as 'idealist' or 'aestheticist' or 'essentialist' by a critical community increasingly determined to regard itself as 'materialist' and 'historicist'. (Felperin 1990, p. 171)

Whether Felperin is making fun of the new orthodoxy or endorsing it is not immediately clear from his text, but others certainly use those 'scare quotes' to demonise their collective enemies. When I read such attempts at stigmatisation, I must admit, a certain stubborn independence rises in me, and I feel tempted to retort: 'Go ahead then! Demonise me! See if I care!' (But that reads like the caption to a James Thurber cartoon.) In more sober language, I would have to say that the 'luggage' so contemptuously rejected¹⁵ is essential accompaniment for a critic, or reader, the ability to

receive a play or novel as an experience in itself, over and above our current, ephemeral, and limited concerns. Felperin describes the views of 'a critical community', but it is only one of many, although it may believe it possesses the exclusive source of knowledge. All schools, however, no matter how self-assured or polemical, would do well to accept that other approaches have a validity, and that no-one has a monopoly over truth. 'Patet omnibus veritas', Ben Jonson wrote (adapting Vives), 'Truth lyes open to all; it is no mans severall'.¹⁶ No-one is about to grant New Historicists, materialists, me, or anyone else an immunity to criticism, an exclusive licence to practice the one true mode of interpretation and outlaw all the others. Peace would be desirable, perhaps, but only if all parties grant each other the right to read Shakespeare as they wish, and be taken to task if they distort him.

* * *

This has been a book about the practice of Shakespeare criticism, and the effect on it of some current theories. I would like to end with some words from Edward Said's book *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, where he argues that 'criticism is reducible neither to doctrine nor to a political position on a particular question', literary or otherwise.

In its suspicion of totalizing concepts, in its discontent with reified objects, in its impatience with guilds, special interests, imperialized fiefdoms, and orthodox habits of mind, criticism is most itself, and . . . most unlike itself at the moment it starts turning into organized dogma. (Said 1983, p. 29)

Criticism, Said believes, should be 'constitutively opposed to every form of tyranny, domination, and abuse; its social goals are noncoercive knowledge produced in the interests of human freedom', for 'the moment anything acquires the status of a cultural idol or a commodity, it ceases to be interesting' (pp. 29–30). While recognising that all readings derive from a theoretical standpoint, conscious or not, Said urges that we avoid using dehumanising abstractions:

it is the critic's job to provide resistances to theory, to open it up toward historical reality, toward society, toward human needs and interests, to point up those concrete instances drawn from everyday reality that lie outside or just beyond the interpretive area necessarily designated in advance and thereafter circumscribed by every theory. (p. 242)

The danger, as we see around us, is that literary theory can 'easily become critical dogma', acquire 'the status of authority within the cultural group' or guild, for 'left to its own specialists and acolytes, so to speak, theory tends to have walls erected around itself . . .' (p. 247). A necessary counter to that tendency is for us 'to move skeptically in the broader political world',

to 'record the encounter of theory with resistances to it', and, among other things, 'to preserve some modest (perhaps shrinking) belief in noncoercive human community'. These would not be imperatives, Said remarks, but 'they do at least seem to be attractive alternatives. And what is critical consciousness at bottom if not an unstoppable predilection for alternatives?'

Notes

Preface

- 1 Descombes 1986, p. 139. Works frequently cited are referred to in this abbreviated form. Full references are given in the Bibliography, p. 491.
- 2 'In Their Masters' Steps', *Times Literary Supplement*, 16-22 December 1988, p. 1399.
- 3 Vincent B. Leitch, *American Literary Criticism From the 30s to the 80s* (New York, 1988). For commentary see Donoghue (note 2 above) and Kermodé 1989, pp. 39ff.
- 4 Announcement by Bedford Books (St. Martin's Press) in *PMLA* 105 (1990): p. 1449.
- 5 In working on Greek tragedy in the late 60s and early 70s (see *Towards Greek Tragedy*: London, 1973) I followed new developments in structuralism and semiology with interest. In the book that emerged, however, I had to reject Lévi-Strauss's structuralist analyses of Greek myth as arbitrary and idiosyncratic (a judgment borne out by the subsequent detailed studies of Pettit 1975, Sperber 1979, and Clarke 1981). By contrast — since it derived from empirical analysis, and did not abandon the concept of individual narratives, or episodes within them, having meaning as a structure of interacting human behaviour — I found the narratological system of Vladimir Propp most helpful in analysing what I discovered to be a coherent pattern in Greek myth of injunctions and prohibitions, ethical, social and religious (see Vickers 1973, pp. 165-267).
- 6 Greimas' career was marked by a seriousness completely lacking in the self-publicity of the iconoclasts. His scholarly work, sober and even ascetic in tone, developed outwards from *Sémantique structurale* (Paris, 1966; English tr. 1983) in one direction in semiotics, poetics and narrative: *Du sens. Essais sémiotiques* (Paris, 1970; English tr. 1987); *Essais de sémiotique poétique* (Paris, 1971); *Sémiotique: dictionnaire raisonné de la théorie du langage* (Paris, 1979; English tr. 1983; supplement, 1986); *Maupassant: la sémiotique du texte, exercices pratiques* (Paris, 1976; English tr. 1988); *Du sens 02* (Paris, 1983). It also took in mythology, as in *Des dieux et des hommes: études de mythologie lithuanienne* (Paris, 1985), and moved out towards sociology in *Sémiotique et sciences sociales* (Paris, 1976; English tr. 1990); and (with others) *Introduction à l'analyse du discours en sciences sociales* (Paris, 1979). In his teaching at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, as Jacques Geninasca recorded in his obituary of Greimas (*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 14-15 March 1992, p. 27), he 'showed a remarkable consistency in developing his semiotic theory', moving on from the reformulation of Propp's narratology to 'lay the basis for a theory of action and manipulation, studying in turn the phenomena of authorisation or qualification, value-objects, and the passions, insofar as these provide the basis for every kind of human interaction'. The coherence of his development is in impressive contrast to the dissolution of Barthes'.
- 7 Although I share some of Jackson's criticisms of post-structuralist literary

theory, especially its incoherence as an adversarial system, designed to negate, not to build afresh (Jackson 1991, pp. 1, 3, 13-14, 59, 119, 152, 157, 161, 199), I cannot warm to the alternatives he proposes. He generally endorses Chomsky (while ignoring his many critics: see Clarke 1981 and Meulen 1988), believes in a great future for computer linguistics and 'Artificial Intelligence', happily describing himself as a 'positivist materialist' (see, e.g., pp. 94, 95, 103, 112, 121, 225). Such spurious scientism is hardly an advance on Lévi-Strauss.

- 8 Anyone wishing to follow up these issues is warmly recommended to use Simon Blackburn's admirable introduction: Blackburn 1988.
- 9 See below, for Jameson on Althusser, Chapter 7 note 26; for Bowie on Lacan, Epilogue, note 14.
- 10 My first reaction appeared in the *Times Literary Supplement* for 26 August 1988, pp. 933-5.

Chapter One: The Diminution of Language

- 1 *Problèmes de linguistique générale*, vol. 2 (Paris, 1974), p. 97.
- 2 For the continuity between these two 'schools' (featuring several of the same actors) see, e.g., Timpanaro 1975, pp. 135-219; Anderson 1983, pp. 32-55; Dews 1987; Frank 1989.
- 3 The text published in 1916 was edited by Charles Bally and Albert Séchéhayé, close associates of Saussure. The liberties they took with the students' notes to which they had access were first revealed by Robert Godel in *Les sources manuscrites du Cours de linguistique générale de F. de Saussure* (Geneva, 1957), especially pp. 95-129. Godel also published further students' notes which were not available to the first editors: 'Cours de linguistique générale, IIe Cours (1908-09)', in *Cahiers Ferdinand de Saussure*, 15 (1957): pp. 3-103. In his invaluable

but misleadingly titled *Cours de linguistique générale. Edition critique* (Wiesbaden, 1967-1974), Rudolf Engler reprinted all the manuscript material, juxtaposing it with the printed text, but following, unfortunately, the sequence of the printed edition, not that of Saussure's lectures. Engler's would be more accurately described as a 'source-edition', since it merely sets out all the material in six parallel columns, and in no way edits Saussure's text. Godel offered a specimen of a critical edition in *Les sources manuscrites*, pp. 121-9, but did not pursue the task: a new edition would be very welcome. Godel also added an outline 'Lexique de la Terminologie' (*ibid.*, pp. 252-81), which has been superseded (not wholly satisfactorily) by Rudolf Engler, *Lexique de la Terminologie Saussurienne* (Utrecht, 1968). The most useful edition remains another so-called 'édition critique', by Tullio de Mauro (Paris, 1972; repr. 1985, with postface by L.-J. Calvet: 'Lire Saussure Aujourd'hui', pp. 505-13). This reprints the text of the 1916 edition, without any fresh editorial work, but adds some 200 pages of notes, at least drawing on the manuscript material and on the extensive secondary literature up to 1970. My quotations, in the form CLG, are to the French text, in my translation. The English translation by Wade Baskin (New York, 1959) unfortunately does not use the manuscript material and is not always accurate.

- 4 See the letter to Antoine Meillet of 4 January 1894, when Saussure was studying Baltic intonation: '... je vois de plus en plus l'immensité... du travail qu'il faudrait pour montrer au linguistique ce qu'il fait;... Sans cesse l'inéptie absolue de la terminologie courante, la nécessité de la réformer, et de montrer pour cela quelle espèce d'objet est la langue en général, vient gêner mon plaisir historique... Cela finira malgré moi

- par un livre où, sans enthousiasme ni passion, j'expliquerai pourquoi il n'y a pas un seul terme employé en linguistique auquel j'accorde un sens quelconque' (reprinted in Benveniste 1966, pp. 36-7). This essay by Benveniste, 'Saussure après un demi-siècle', quotes other illuminating passages from the correspondence.
- 5 See Godel 1957, pp. 95-129, and de Mauro's note, CLG, p. 406 n. 12. For helpful comments on the editors' treatment, see Calvet 1975, pp. 17-31, and Holdcroft 1991, pp. 13-16, 162-3.
 - 6 CLG, p. 317 and de Mauro's note, pp. 476-7, n. 305; Godel 1957, pp. 119, 181. Harris 1987, pp. 191-2 disputes that this is such an alien addition, on the grounds that the opening sentence of the book included the phrase 'véritable et unique objet' (CLG, p. 13).
 - 7 See Engler's 'Edition Critique', *op. cit.* in note 3, pp. 168-9, on institutions.
 - 8 As David Holdcroft points out, a signifier 'does have a meaning, since it is associated with a signified', and so signifiers have more than a purely differentiating role: they have values (Holdcroft 1991, pp. 57, 132-3). Neither can signifieds be 'purely negative and differential entities' (pp. 126-30). To take this 'dubious' principle, as structuralists and post-structuralists have done, as the basis for further argument, is to 'build on one of the most opaque parts of Saussure's theory' (p. 130).
 - 9 Ernest Renan, for instance, in his essay 'De l'Origine du langage' (1848), stated that 'la liaison du sens et du mot n'est jamais nécessaire, jamais arbitraire; toujours elle est motivée': *cit.* Plotkin 1989, pp. 31, 162. No concept in Saussure has provoked more discussion than the arbitrariness of the sign. In his 'Théorie et critique d'un principe saussurien: l'arbitraire du signe' (*Cahiers Ferdinand de Saussure* 19 (1962): 5-66), Rudolf Engler could already list and discuss over 70 (in

- some cases widely diverging) interpretations. Most often cited is the 1939 essay of Emile Benveniste, 'Nature du signe linguistique' (reprinted in Benveniste 1966, pp. 49-55), which argued that the link between the signified and signifier was not arbitrary but necessary, and that arbitrariness actually characterised the link between the sign and the part of reality to which it is applied. For the second point, given the lengths to which Saussure went to present language as a self-contained system that could not have been his meaning, although we might well prefer it. For the first, the fact that the link between the concept 'boeuf' and the acoustic image 'bœf' already existed, and that Benveniste claimed that he acquired it in learning to speak ('Ensemble les deux ont été imprimés dans mon esprit': p. 51), means only that the association had been accepted into the *langue* by the social group into which he was born, not that its original formation was not arbitrary. In this sense, retaining Saussure's point about the arbitrariness of the sign as originally formed or accepted by the linguistic community, I would agree with Lévi-Strauss that 'the linguistic sign is arbitrary a priori but ceases to be arbitrary a posteriori' (Lévi-Strauss 1963, p. 91). For critical comment on Benveniste's essay see, e.g., Descombes 1983, pp. 216-18, and Ellis 1989, pp. 47-8. See also Hans Aarsleff, *From Locke to Saussure; Essays On the Study of Language and Intellectual History* (Minneapolis, Mn., 1982), pp. 356-71, 382-98.
- 10 Roy Harris (Harris 1987) indicts Saussure for inconsistency (pp. 58, 199, 225, 230); obscurity and confusion (pp. 61, 81, 89, 95, 119-20, 128, 132, 139, 146, 148, 149, 153, 156, 158, 159, 165, 184, 192, 211, 230, 231, 235); and misleading or inadequately developed analogies (pp. 92-4, 100-102, 121-34). David Holdcroft (Holdcroft 1991)

- finds Saussure guilty of vagueness (pp. 32, 63, 65, 97); confusion (pp. 56, 59, 129, 136, 139); contradiction (pp. 60-1, 157); and misleading or inadequately developed analogies (pp. 34, 77-80, 107, 112-15, 119, 131, 132).
- 11 For illuminating, but often extremely critical accounts of Lévi-Strauss, see Pettit 1975, pp. 37-9, 68-97; Timpanaro 1975, pp. 171-98; Anderson 1983, pp. 37-55; Merquior 1986a, pp. 34-106; Pavel 1989, pp. 9-11, 23-37, 104-6, 138-40. The best account in English is Clarke 1981.
 - 12 See CLG, pp. 100-101, 106-107, 110-11 with note 157; R. Godel, 'Notes Inédites de Ferdinand de Saussure', in *Cahiers Ferdinand de Saussure* 12 (1954), pp. 60, 62-4.
 - 13 Bacon, *Works* X, p. 85.
 - 14 Lacan's most notorious attack on Saussure juxtaposed a diagram of a tree, under which the word 'Arbor' is written (Lacan's own invention: no such diagram appears in Saussure), with another of two identical doors, marked 'Hommes-Dames' in order to argue (it is not always clear what, since the prose-style is coyly self-indulgent) that 'in fact the signifier intrudes into the signified' (Lacan 1966, pp. 498-501). My instant objection on reading this essay was that Lacan's diagram is an ellipsis, with the word 'toilet' understood, such conveniences being subdivided at the entry point, and having other structural differences inside. Vincent Descombes now makes the more telling objection that in this 'farical variation' on Saussure, Lacan has silently changed ground in moving from the singular (Arbor) to the plural (Ladies, Gentlemen), where the drawing in any case might have represented two groups, men and women. The "signifiers" in Lacan's example are in the plural because grammar dictates the plural for this particular use. Thus the example does not associate Saussurean signifiers and signifieds but illustrates
- a context for using the notices "Ladies" and "Gentlemen". They are statements', not signifiers, in the form 'this door is exclusively for...' (Descombes 1986, p. 180). That example is typical for the slippery way in which Lacan used his terms.
- 15 Several critics have objected to this distortion: Marc Angenot states that Lacan's references to Saussure constitute 'a simple absorption, literally extravagant, of Saussure's terminology into his own reflection, a reflection not only alien to Saussure's thought but also... diametrically opposed' to it (Angenot 1984, p. 157). Manfred Frank observes that the expression 'signifier' in Lacan's text 'is undoubtedly incorrectly chosen, for... a signifier is itself an ideality, essentially defined by and constituted in view of the signified. It would therefore be self-contradictory to believe that the signified could slide under the signifier, for, as Saussure repeatedly emphasized, the sign can only change as a whole' (Frank 1989, pp. 427-8); even Derrida objected to Lacan's misuse of Saussure. Merquior 1986a, p. 155, comments that to 'speak of 'an alleged "incessant sliding of the signified under the signifier"... is to assert the primacy of the signifier in a spirit utterly foreign to Saussure's sober polarity: with Lacan, the signified goes overboard and the polarity is destroyed. Thus ultimately the unconscious is no language — it is just... obscurely endowed with a dense, dim margin of symbolic meaning'.
 - 16 In *L'Homme Nu* (1971), Lévi-Strauss wrote: 'We don't feel at all indulgent towards that sleight-of-hand which switches the left hand with the right, to give back to the worst philosophy beneath the table what it claims to have taken from it above; which, simply replacing the self by the Other and slipping a metaphysic of desire beneath the concept, pulls the foundation from under the latter. Because, in replacing the self on

- the one hand with an anonymous Other, and on the other with an individualized desire (even if it designates nothing), there is no way in which one can hinder the fact that one need only stick them together again and turn the whole thing round to rediscover on the other side that self whose abolition one has proclaimed with such a fuss' (p. 563; tr. Clarke 1981, pp. 215-16).
- 17 See Ferry and Renaut 1985, pp. 259-60 for a terrifying account of the practice encouraged by Lacan of the analyst remaining absolutely silent, refusing any response until the frantic patient realises "the betrayals of his own language" and begins the "analytical regression" that will lead him back from the *moi* to the subject. This practice is apparently in line with Lacan's theory of the 'Other' as 'a reified moi', an object that we can treat as we like, since he does not understand his own meaning. The authors comment that here Lacan committed the error 'common to the logic of "all or nothing" that characterizes contemporary anti-humanism, according to which the *real* autonomy of the subject being manifestly illusory, the very *idea* of autonomy has lost all meaning as a guide to practice' (p. 261). This is what I call the coercive dichotomy, or the leap across extremes.
- 18 As Perry Anderson observes, such analogies 'give way on the smallest critical inspection. . . Far from the unconscious being structured like a language, or coinciding with it, Freud's construction of it as the object of psychoanalytic enquiry precisely defines it as incapable of the generative grammar which, for a post-Saussurian linguistics, comprises the deep structures of language: that is, the competence to form sentences and carry out correctly the rules of their transformations. The Freudian unconscious, innocent even of negation, is a stranger to all syntax' (Anderson 1983, p. 43). In an essay of 1956, 'Remarques sur la fonction du langage dans la découverte freudienne', Emile Benveniste made a devastating critique of analogies drawn by psychoanalysis between language and the unconscious, demolishing Freud's attempts at linguistics, and making three concise objections: the symbol-system that constitutes language is acquired by a learning process, unlike that of the unconscious; the linguistic sign is unmotivated, Freudian symbols are by definition motivated; and if the unconscious is universal, as Freud claimed, language, by contrast, is divided into differing national languages: Benveniste 1966, p. 75-87.
- 19 Elizabeth Wright, summarising Samuel Weber's book, *Return to Freud: Jacques Lacan's Dislocation of Psychoanalysis*, in *Times Literary Supplement* 28 February 1992, p. 26.
- 20 See Stephen Heath, *Le vertige du déplacement* (Paris, 1974), p. 57.
- 21 Several recent independent studies agree that semiological analyses never cohered as a system (Pettit 1975, pp. 61-4, 106-17), and that the current state of semiology is 'one of simultaneous institutional success and bankruptcy' (Sperber and Wilson 1986, pp. 7-8). Although the 1970s developments gave it a place in university departments, 'no semiotic law of any significance was ever discovered, let alone applied to linguistics' (*ibid.*). Semiotics, another commentator writes, did not realise the truth of Saussure's original contention that language is *sui generis*, cannot simply be lumped with other sign-systems, which lack the ability language has of being 'part of productive systems', capable of generating indefinitely many utterances (Holdcroft 1991, p. 156). Twenty years older, and wiser, we can now see that the question of meaning can no longer be ignored. Courtesy formulas may constitute a sign-system, as Saussure proposed,

- and it may well be possible to discover how their rules specify who should use them, and when: but the crucial issue is to discover the rules that define their content and meaning (*ibid.*, p. 157).
- 22 Vincent Descombes points out that semiology's comparison between human language and a communication code ignores 'one obvious difference: a code is constructed, while a language is not. To construct a code, we require a language'. A natural language is not a code about which, at some primordial time, its speakers 'reached an agreement prior to all conversation with the sole intention of exchanging information' (p. 102). Furthermore, 'a language does not have the univocity of a code, in which the semantic value of each symbol is fixed by decree' (*ibid.*). Languages evolve haphazardly, usages in semantics, grammar, and syntax changing according to local conditions and outside influences, the diachronic element constantly affecting the synchronic. And although set up on a different plane from language, 'the construction of the code is always carried out in the natural language' (p. 103). A code, then, is an artificial construct having properties that make it preferable to language for certain purposes, but it would be a naïve capitulation to the assumed 'rigour' or certainty of science to erect it as the norm for methodology in the humanities. To Descombes the paradox of structuralism is that it attacked the traditional philosophy of human consciousness by claiming that the signifier is not at the service of the subject, and that man is subjected to signifying systems. Yet in downgrading human importance it based itself on cybernetics, the name describing a science intended 'to invest human beings with total control by means of better communications techniques' (p. 103). The Greek word *kybernētēs* means, after all, a steersman. On the de-
- ficiencies of communication conceived in terms of a code see also Sperber and Wilson 1986.
- 23 Only a decade later Barthes consciously rejected the scientific aspirations of semiotics. Looking back on his career in 1975 he could write of this phase that 'the goal of a semiological science is replaced by the (often very grim) science of the semiologists; hence, one [= Barthes] must sever oneself from that, must introduce into this rational image-repertoire the texture of desire, the claims of the body: this, then, is the Text. . . ' (Barthes 1977, p. 71). His career might be described as 'from scientism to hedonism', but even in his latest phase Saussure's categories could be redeployed to serve the present purpose. In *Le Plaisir du texte* (1973) Barthes described one effect of *jouissance* as being that it "lifts" the signified, so that all value goes to the "sumptuous plane of the signifier" (cit. Merquior 1986a, p. 157).
- 24 In 1961 Barthes used similarly extreme terms in declaring that 'each time men speak about the world, they enter into a relation of exclusion, even when they speak in order to denounce it: a metalanguage is always terrorist' (Barthes 1972, p. 170).
- 25 The inspiration here is undoubtedly Foucault, present in the audience, and whom Barthes acknowledged as a tutelary spirit (Barthes 1982, p. 458). Compare Foucault's inaugural lecture in the same amphitheatre, six years previously: 'in every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organised and redistributed according to a certain number of procedures, whose role is to avert its powers and its dangers. . . ' (Foucault 1972, p. 216). No agency is named, either here or in other comments on the 'appropriation' of discourse (*ibid.*, pp. 68, 105, 120, 227). The Oxford philosopher Galen Strawson, reviewing Didier Eribon's biography of

- Foucault recently reports that it shows very clearly how 'Foucault was a casualty of the windy and self-indulgent intellectual culture in which he was raised, and of its sad, trashy relation to language'. *The Independent on Sunday Review*, 16 August 1992, p. 17.
- 26 Foucault's concept of the *episteme* has been criticised both in logical terms, as arbitrary and idiosyncratic, by Jean Piaget, *Structuralism*, tr. C. Maschler (London, 1971), pp. 128-35; and in historical terms, as being completely invalid for the sixteenth century, by George Huppert in 'Divinatio et eruditio: Thoughts On Foucault', *History and Theory* 13 (1974): pp. 191-207. See also Merquior 1985, pp. 56-75.
- 27 On Derrida's characteristic practice of borrowing from but heavily criticising German philosophy, see Ferry and Renaut 1985, pp. 46-9, 54-7, 164-97; Dews 1987, pp. 19-24; Frank 1989, pp. 59-61, 195-201, 221-53, 258-61, 262-88, 410-26, 430-8, 442-8; Merquior 1986a, pp. 217-27.
- 28 See, e.g., Searle 1983, pp. 75-6; Searle 1984, p. 48; Tallis 1988, pp. 87-93, 167-71, 181-5, 211-14; Ellis 1989, pp. 19-21, 45-60, 63-6; Jackson 1991, pp. 63, 105, 186-7 ('Derrida's distortion of Saussure's original intention [accusing him of a completely fictive "phonocentrism"] is very great here, and I think quite inexcusable. It amounts to a big lie, which is believed [by literary critics who have not read Saussure] because no one can imagine why it should have been told.' — Obviously, in order to dispose of a rival eminence). I add another example. Derrida's claim that in Saussure 'the play of differences, which . . . is the condition for the possibility and functioning of every sign, is in itself a silent play. Inaudible is the difference between two phonemes which alone permits them to be and to operate as such' (Derrida 1982, p. 51). This is the first of many occasions where Derrida takes what Saussure says about the constituent parts of the sign and applies it to the whole. What Saussure actually wrote concerned 'ce qu'il y a de systématique dans ce jeu de différences phoniques' (CLG, p. 163; my italics). Saussure was talking about the signifier, the acoustic image, part of the 'material aspect of language' (chapter-title), and it is perfectly clear from the examples given that he conceived of an actual spoken sound. It is quite wrong for Derrida to describe it as 'silent play', and he compounds the error by saying that 'the difference between two phonemes is inaudible'. It is obvious from Saussure's text that although he conceived the phoneme elsewhere in abstract terms, he used the term here in the concrete sense of 'éléments phoniques . . . sons' (sense *b* in Engler 1968, s.v.). Derrida's claim that there is, in the special sense he means, 'no phonetic writing' therefore collapses.
- 29 A three-card trick is one in which a card-sharper shows three cards, of which one is the point-scorer (the queen, say), and invites bystanders to identify it after he has shuffled all three. For one instance of this technique in Derrida see the first paragraphs of his 1966 lecture, 'Structure, Sign and Play . . .': Derrida 1978, pp. 278-300.
- 30 On these various misrepresentations: for Lévi-Strauss, see Timpanaro 1975, pp. 177-8; for Foucault, see Plotkin 1989, pp. 13-14, 28-35, 159 note 26; for Althusser, see Thompson 1978, and Chapter 7 below.
- 31 For more detailed discussions of Husserl and Derrida see, e.g., Tallis 1988, pp. 189-209; Frank 1989, pp. 222-257.
- 32 See, e.g., Abrams 1979, p. 274, for the judgment that Derrida 'remains committed to absolutism' although he claims to have 'dismantled the traditional absolutes' and Merquior 1986a, pp. 232-4, for the view

- that 'radical scepticism, about meaning as about almost everything else, is at bottom just a disappointed absolutism'.
- 33 See, e.g., Searle 1977, pp. 199-203; Searle 1983, pp. 75-8; Ellis 1989, pp. 18-66; Tallis 1988, pp. 164-233; Merquior 1986a, pp. 215-17; Jackson 1991, pp. 182-91.
- 34 Dissatisfaction with Derrida's mode of argument has often been expressed: 'Derrida has a distressing penchant for saying things that are obviously false' (Searle 1977, p. 203); 'Derrida's reasons for denying presence, or self-presence to the speaker are invariably badly presented. It is often unclear where he is putting forward an argument and where he is making an assumption. Presuppositions, premisses and conclusions are mixed together in the seamless muddle of his prose. Often one does not know when he is presenting his own views and when he is presenting (or misrepresenting) the views of others' (Tallis 1988, p. 181). J.G. Merquior comments critically on Derrida's 'irrationalist philosophy', with 'its blatant non-sequiturs' and 'logical jumps'. He judges that in most of Derrida's later essays 'oracular assertion by dint of jocular or half-jocular pun-juggling has come to replace argument almost completely' (Merquior 1986a, pp. 226, 227, 228).
- 35 Descombes also commented that 'too evident confusion surrounds the concept of language' in French thought since the 60s: 'the signifier co-opted into the list of determining elements may be a language, or it may be a statement. . . . Sometimes the determining signifier is Saussurean', at others 'it is a message' (Descombes 1986, p. 188).
- 36 Luce Irigaray, 'Le schizophrène et la question du signe', *Recherches* 16 (1974), pp. 34, 37.
- 37 *Philosophical Investigations*, tr. G.E.M. Anscombe (Oxford, 1953, 1958), §132.
- 38 See Tallis 1988, pp. 58, 65-96; for a truly embarrassing documentation of careless or simply ignorant versions of Saussure put about the cutting edge of English avant-garde theory, such as Terry Eagleton's claim (in 1983) that Saussure made 'the relation between sign and referent' arbitrary, so that 'literary studies . . . are a question of the signifier, not of the signified'; or Terence Hawkes's announcement (in 1977) that 'since writers use words . . . their art must in the end be composed of signifiers without signifieds', and the critic must respond to 'literature's essential nature in which signifiers are prized utterly free of signifieds' ('prised' suggests an act of violence that you might perform on a recalcitrant dog, or a corpse: so must the post-structuralist critic impose himself on language); or Catherine Belsey's reasoning (in 1980) that 'words seem to be symbols for things because things are inconceivable outside the system of differences which constitute the language', and that 'if discourses articulate concepts through a system of signs which signify by means of their relationship to each other rather than to entities in the world, and if literature is a signifying practice, all it can reflect is the order inscribed in particular discourses, not the nature of the world'. For similar exposures of glaring errors in the exposition of Saussure's ideas in two other English books produced in 1977, see Jackson 1991, pp. 237-41 on Tony Bennett's *Formalism and Marxism*, and pp. 248-53 on the textbook by Rosalind Coward and John Ellis (not to be confused with John M. Ellis, author of *Against Deconstruction*), *Language and Materialism*, which is apparently on the syllabuses of at least twenty institutions of higher education in Britain. All this shows is that our theorists have simply absorbed the clinker or rubble of Derrida *et Cie.* without thinking for themselves. *Quis custodiet?*
- 39 Blackburn's argument is corroborated

- independently by the psychologist H.S. Terrace: see his article, 'In the Beginning Was the "Name"', *American Psychologist* 40 (1985): pp. 1011-28, and 'Apes and Us: An Exchange', *New York Review of Books*, 10 October 1991, pp. 53-4, where he argues, against Chomsky's theory of the primacy of a genetically determined capacity for syntax, that 'the cognitive leap to language' must have 'occurred in two stages: first, developing the lexical competence to use arbitrary symbols to refer to particular objects and events, and then the syntactic competence to combine and inflect those symbols systematically so as to create new meanings'. In reply Solly Zuckerman agrees that 'in all logic, rules of grammar and syntax would have been adaptively meaningless had their emergence preceded that of the lexical component of language, of individual words with referential meanings'. Both scholars agree that grammar and syntax developed 'because of the additional adaptive value of joining lexical items in ways that multiplied the meanings that they conveyed' beyond the limits of single words (p. 53).
- 40 For other useful studies of language acquisition see Roger Brown, *A First Language. The Early Stages* (London, 1973); Elizabeth Bates, *The Emergence of Symbols. Cognition and Communication in Infancy* (New York, 1979); and P. Fletcher and M. Garman (eds.), *Language Acquisition. Studies in First Language Development* (Cambridge, 1986).
- 41 Benveniste 1966, pp. 225-36: 'Structure des relations de personne dans le verbe' (1946); pp. 251-7: 'La nature des pronoms' (1956); and pp. 258-66: 'De la subjectivité dans le langage' (1958).
- 42 On the significance of pronouns in Shakespeare see, e.g., Sister St. Geraldine Byrne, *Shakespeare's Use of the Pronoun of Address* (Washington, D.C., 1936); Roger Brown and Albert Gilman, 'The pronouns of power and solidarity', in T.A. Sebeok (ed.), *Style in Language* (Cambridge, Mass., 1960), pp. 253-76; T. Finkenstaedt, *You and Thou. Studien zur Anrede im Englischen* (Berlin, 1963); V. Salmon and E. Burness (eds.), *A Reader in the Language of Shakespearean Drama* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia, 1987), especially the essays by Joan Mulholland (pp. 153-61) and Charles Barber (pp. 163-79); and my essay "'Mutual render": I and Thou in the Sonnets', *Vickers* 1989, pp. 41-88. I regret my ignorance of Benveniste's work when I wrote this essay (although one of the linguists I cited, John Lyons, evidently did know it).
- 43 For many years only parts of Grice's lectures were available, the best known being: H.P. Grice, 'Logic and Conversation', in P. Cole and J.L. Morgan (eds.), *Syntax and Semantics 3: Speech Acts* (New York, 1975), pp. 41-58, and 'Further Notes on Logic and Conversation', in P. Cole (ed.), *Syntax and Semantics 9: Pragmatics* (New York, 1970), pp. 113-28. The full text, together with many other essays, appeared in Grice 1989. In *Towards a Speech Act Theory of Literary Discourse* (Bloomington, Ind., 1977), Mary L. Pratt was able to use the ms. of Grice's lectures as preserved at Harvard. For a guide to commentary on Grice see the two volumes edited by P. Cole, and Horn
- 44 Cit. E.A.J. Honigmann, *Myriad-Minded Shakespeare* (London, 1989), p. 60. J.G. Merquior, commenting on Roman Jakobson's literary theory, clarifies the point at issue: 'From the fact that literature is made of language it does not follow that literary meaning (let alone value) is something reducible to language. . . . It is a matter of not mistaking the function of a product, or goal of an activity, for what one needs in order to produce the former or perform the latter': Merquior 1986a, p. 31.
- 45 See Vickers 1973, pp. 362-7, and

- Olsen 1987, pp. 121-37.
- 46 See my essay on 'Shakespeare's Hypocrites', *Vickers* 1989, pp. 89-134 (on *Othello*, pp. 110-23).
- 47 See Bertrand Evans, *Shakespeare's Comedies* (Oxford, 1962).
- 48 See Vickers 1989, *op.cit.* note 46, 'Shakespeare's Hypocrites', p. 111.
- 49 *A Short History of Ethics* (London, 1967).
- 50 See Vickers 1988, pp. 336-7 and note 57.
- 51 'A general pattern for the working out of a conversational implicature might be given as follows: "He has said that *p*; there is no reason to suppose that he is not observing the maxims, or at least the Cooperative Principle; he could not be doing this unless he thought that *q*; he knows (and knows that I know he knows) that I can see that the supposition that he thinks that *q* IS required; he has done nothing to stop me thinking that *q*; he intends me to think, or is at least willing to allow me to think, that *q*; and so he has implicated that *q*" (Grice 1989, p. 31).
- 52 Some philosophers have criticised Gricean speech-act theory for failing to consider language users' attempts at deception and concealment: see Blackburn 1984, p. 114, who also makes the necessary caveat that to read Grice as if he were arguing that meaning could be understood solely 'in terms of some amalgam of intentions, conventions, or beliefs. . . ignores or distorts the compositional nature of language', and fails to consider 'how it is established that a sentence or word means any particular thing' (p. 127).
- 53 Personal communication, commenting on an earlier draft of this chapter.
- 3 See Morse Peckham, *Man's Rage for Chaos* (New York, 1967), for the argument that the function of art is to disturb, not placate us.
- 4 Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente*, November 1887-March 1888, in Nietzsche, *Sämtliche Werke. Kritische Studienausgabe in 15 Bänden*, ed. G. Colli and M. Montinari, Vol. 13 (Berlin, 1980), p. 45: 'Der philosophische Nihilist ist der Ueberzeugung, dass alles Geschehen sinnlos und umsonst ist; und es sollte kein sinnloses und umsonstiges Sein geben.' The translation is by Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale from the work put together by Nietzsche's sister and erroneously known as *The Will to Power* (New York, 1967), p. 23.
- 5 *The First Anniversarie*, lines 205-214, in C.A. Patrides (ed.) *The Complete English Poems of John Donne* (London, 1985), p. 335.
- 6 'The Essential Tension: Tradition and Innovation in Scientific Research', in *The Essential Tension. Selected Studies in Scientific Tradition and Change* (Chicago, 1977), pp. 225-39; page-references incorporated in the text.
- 7 'Editor's Foreword', *Modern Philology* 89:1 (August 1991), p. 3.
- 8 Eliot's two essays on Milton are conveniently reprinted in F. Kermode (ed.) *Selected Prose of T.S. Eliot* (London, 1975): the 1936 piece is given complete (pp. 258-64), the 1947 'one slightly shortened' (pp. 265-74). For Leavis, see *Revaluations* (London, 1936; 1959), p. 42.
- 9 'The Garden of Love', *Songs of Experience*.
- 10 C. Perelman and L. Olbrechts-Tyteca, *Traité de l'argumentation. La Nouvelle rhétorique* (Paris, 1958; 3rd ed. Brussels, 1976), paras. 90-96, 556-609. Quoted from the translation by J. Wilkinson and P. Weaver, *The New Rhetoric. A Treatise On Argumentation* (Notre Dame, Ind., 1969); page-references incorporated in the text. See also

Chapter Two: Creator and Interpreters

- 1 Wittgenstein 1958, Part I, §524.
2 See Thomas Pavel, *Fictional Worlds* (Cambridge, Mass., 1986).

- Brian Vickers, 'The Dangers of Dichotomy', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 51 (1990): pp. 148-59.
- 11 See, e.g., Graff 1980, pp. 418-19; Altieri 1981, pp. 225-9; Fischer 1985, p. 40; Harris 1988, pp. 162-3.
- 12 See, e.g., de Man 1979, pp. 10, 31, 32, 47, 49, 50, 54, 76, 147, 160, 161, 162, 173, 187, 196, 197, 203, 205, 207, 208, 209, 212, 234, 240, 245, 269, 292, 293, 294, 299.
- 13 Horn 1988, pp. 116-17. See also, e.g., Lyons 1968, pp. 275-81; Lyons 1977, pp. 275-80.
- 14 See, e.g., Searle 1969; Cole and Morgan 1975 (especially the essays by Grice, Searle, Gordon and Lakoff, Davison, Fraser, Schmerling, Cole, Garner, and Wright).
- 15 On the deficiencies of Foucault's historiography see Merquior 1985 and the many critiques reviewed there, especially those by Klaus Doerner, Jon Elster, George Huppert, Jacques Léonard, H.C. Erik Midelfort, Jan Miel, G.S. Rousseau, Peter Sedgwick, Peter Spierenberg and Karel Williams.
- 16 *Tristes Tropiques* (Paris, 1955); English tr. by J. Russell (London, 1976), p. 71.
- 17 *La Pensée sauvage* (Paris, 1962), p. 326; in the anonymous English translation *The Savage Mind* (London, 1972), p. 247. See Merquior 1986, pp. 70-2, for a penetrating analysis of the ruling mood of anti-humanism in French intellectual circles at this time, which amounted to 'an anti-anthropocentrism, sometimes verging on anthropoclasm, a general demotion of man from his King-of-Creation throne'; also Nuttall 1983, pp. 22-4.
- 18 Ferry and Renaut 1985, especially 'L'Anti-humanisme de la Pensée 68' (pp. 18-25), 'Le Procès du Sujet' (pp. 41-53), 'Le Sujet en Appel' (pp. 53-61), 'Mai 68 et la Mort du Sujet' (pp. 98-103), the chapters on Foucault, Derrida, Althusser and Lacan, *passim* (pp. 105-261), and 'Retour au Sujet' (pp. 264-85). For other comments on the return of the subject in Foucault see Merquior 1985, pp. 33, 106; Dews 1987, p. xvii, and Frank 1989, p. 386. See also Manfred Frank's searching analysis of the issue of subjectivity in French thought from Lévi-Strauss to Deleuze, lectures 12-24 of *What is Neostucturalism?* (Frank 1989, pp. 183-391, and index s.v. 'Subject' and 'Subjectivity'). There are pertinent comments also in Merquior 1985, pp. 13, 17-18, 49, 77, 80-82, 111, 116-18, and Dews 1987, pp. 70-77.
- 19 The English translation (by Rupert Swyer) omits the last four words in the French text, which I have added ('régularité, aléa, dépendance, transformation'). They are all terms used in mathematics.
- 20 On the return or recoil of rejected concepts see Merquior 1986a, pp. 233-4; Dews 1987, pp. 37, 40; Pavel 1989, pp. 51, 88-92; Frank 1989, pp. 21, 96, 397; Burke 1992. For Lyotard's critique of this movement in French thought see Dews 1987, pp. 111-17, 128-33.
- 21 See Burke 1992, an admirably searching study which appeared too late for me to use; but see Additional note 2.
- 22 Letter to William Blackwood, 31 May 1902; *The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad*, ed. F.R. Karl and L. Davies, vol. 2 (Cambridge, 1986), p. 418.
- 23 See Leavis, 'Literary Criticism and Philosophy', reprinted in *The Common Pursuit* (London, 1952), pp. 211-22, a reply to Wellek's comments on *Revaluation in Scrutiny*, 1937.
- 24 See 'Diabolic Intellect and the Noble Hero', repr. in Leavis 1952, pp. 136-59, especially p. 144 (for Leavis's claim that 'Othello's mind undoes him, not Iago's: the text is plain enough'), and p. 153 ('If we ask the believers in Iago's intellect where they find it, they can hardly point to anything immediately present in the text...'). The appropriate comment is that 'all

- textual examples are themselves interpretive problems rather than "brute givens" (Hirsch 1967, p. x).
- 25 As Olsen says, the author's 'literary intentions are expressed in the work', which is 'autonomous in the sense that the understanding of it is independent of the author's interpretation of his own production'. The author's account of his work's meaning has no special authority, is open to verification like any other (Olsen 1978, p. 118). For an account of the so-called 'intentional fallacy' diagnosed by W.K. Wimsatt and C. Brooks (which had nothing to do with 'intention' as used here) see Olsen 1987, pp. 27-36, and for the wider importance of intentionality in contemporary approaches to the humanities see Quentin Skinner, 'Motives, Intentions and the Interpretation of Texts' (1976), in Skinner 1988, pp. 68-78, together with 'A Reply to My Critics', *ibid.*, pp. 231-88 (especially pp. 268-85), and John Searle, *Intentionality. An essay in the philosophy of mind* (Cambridge, 1983).
- 26 Thus Barbara Herrnstein Smith, in *Contingencies of Value: Alternative Perspectives for Critical Theory*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1988), p. 34: 'Since there are no functions performed by artworks that may be specified as generically unique and also no way to distinguish the "rewards" provided by art-related experiences or behavior from those provided by innumerable other kinds of experience and behavior, any distinctions drawn between "aesthetic" and "nonaesthetic" (or "extra-aesthetic") value must be regarded as fundamentally problematic'. This crass denial of the unique properties of art works, individually shaped by their creators, proves the truth of Richard Wollheim's diagnosis that the upshot of an aesthetic which bases itself on the spectator alone (and this is Smith's aesthetic, consciously or not) is 'that works of art will emerge as on an equal footing with works of nature, in that both are looked upon to provide the spectator with a sensuous array of colours, forms, sounds, movements, to which he may variously respond'. Denying the artefact means denying the artist, who 'ends up by dropping out of the picture altogether' (Wollheim 1980, p. 228). As Hamlet says, 'this was sometime a paradox, but now the time gives it proof'.
- 27 See, e.g., Gerald Else, *Aristotle's Poetics: The Argument* (Cambridge, Mass., 1957), especially pp. 224-32, 423-50, and Vickers 1973, Appendix I (pp. 609-15).
- 28 *Shakespeare: The Critical Heritage*, Vol. 5: 1765-1774 (London and Boston, 1979), p. 165.
- 29 This essay (cited as Barthes 1982) appeared in *Communications*, no. 11, an issue devoted to 'Vraisemblance'. For similar assertions by Michael Riffaterre see the discussion in Butler 1984, pp. 47-53.
- 30 Alter refers to Genette's essay, 'Vraisemblance et Motivation', in *Figures III* (Paris, 1969), pp. 71-99.
- 31 A.D. Nuttall has exposed the obvious fallacies in some arguments made by Terence Hawkes in *Structuralism and Semiotics* (1977), such as the claim that 'The world consists not of things but of relationships', commenting: 'Something is obviously badly wrong' with this theorem, for 'the notion of a relationship presupposes the notion of things which are related. A world consisting of pure relationship, that is, a world in which there are no things, is *ex hypothesi* a world in which no thing is related to any other and in which there could therefore be no relationship. The proposition is thus fundamentally incoherent...' (Nuttall 1983, pp. 8-9). Similarly with Hawkes's pronouncement that 'A wholly objective perception of individual entities is not possible: any observer is bound to create something of what he observes. Accordingly the relationship between observer and

- observed . . . becomes the only thing that can be observed. It becomes the stuff of reality itself', on which Nuttall comments that a 'flat contradiction' exists between the first sentence and the second: the observer is not watching relationships, so the deduction at 'accordingly' merely 'denotes' inconsequence. What is implied is nothing less than a collective cultural solipsism. This is at first sight horrifying but at second glance absurd since it can advance no claim upon our assent. The monster has no teeth' (*ibid.*, p. 11). See pp. 43-4 for another Hawkes clanger.
- 32 As Madeleine Doran succinctly put it, that 'Aristotle did not understand [*mimēsis*] in any literally representational or naturalistic sense . . . is clear (1) from his idea of universal truth (poetry representing not what has happened, but what might happen, therefore more "philosophical" than history); (2) from his preference in the shaping of tragic plots for a probable impossibility to an improbable possibility; (3) from his theory of selection and emphasis, tragedy representing men as better than they are, comedy as worse; (4) from his remarks on propriety in character; and (5) from his prescription that tragedy should be written in verse and in an embellished style': Doran 1954, p. 72.
- 33 I quote from Margaret Hubbard's excellent translation of the *Poetics* in *Ancient Literary Criticism*, ed. D.A. Russell and M. Winterbottom (Oxford, 1972), p. 100.
- 34 See Bernard Weinberg, *A History of Literary Criticism in the Italian Renaissance*, 2 vols. (Chicago, 1961).
- 35 I quote from the outstanding edition by Geoffrey Shepherd, *Sidney's An Apology for Poetry* (London, 1965); page-references incorporated in the text.
- 36 On the repeated criticism of Shakespeare for having failed to observe the neoclassic system of rules; see, e.g., Brian Vickers (ed.)

Shakespeare: The Critical Heritage, 6 vols. (London and Boston, 1974-1981), vol. 1, pp. 4-10, 14-18; vol. 2, pp. 1-12; vol. 3, pp. 1-10; vol. 4, pp. 1-24, 31-8; vol. 5, pp. 1-12, 23-32, 43; vol. 6, pp. 6-42.

- 37 *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 28-9.
- 38 See, e.g., Gildon's pointed defence of Shakespeare (in 1694) against Rymer's racist critique; *ibid.*, pp. 72-9.
- 39 London, 1960.
- 40 Alter's account of *Tristram Shandy* as the paradigmatic self-conscious novel is worth quoting: 'It continually evinces a three-tiered attitude toward the representation of reality in fiction: to begin with, a hyperconsciousness of the sheer arbitrariness of all literary means, from typography and chapter divisions to character and plot; at the same time a paradoxical demonstration, perhaps especially manifest in Sterne's brilliant stylistic improvisations, of the illusionist power of fictional representations of reality; and, finally, a constant implication of the reader in the arbitrary structure-making functions of the mind, which themselves, as our intimately familiar mental experience, become part of the reality represented in the novel. It will be seen that the third tier is only the mimetic obverse of the critical exposure of mimesis observable on the first tier' (Alter 1978, pp. 239-40). Yet, although it is perhaps only in the late twentieth century that readers can for the first time appreciate 'all the cunning convolutions of Sterne's fictional self-consciousness', Alter notes that the novel remained popular 'throughout the age of realism of the nineteenth century . . . because of the convincing mimesis it produces through its maze of flaunted artifice', the vivid images of domestic and provincial life, the varied characters of 'the two Shandy brothers, Trim's tender sensibilities', and so on (p. 240). For a fuller study see Alter,

Partial Magic: The Novel As a Self-Conscious Genre (Berkeley and Los Angeles, Cal., 1975). This is virtually the only point in Kendall Walton's valuable defence of mimesis where I would take issue with him, the claim that works of literature (he cites *Vanity Fair* and Calvino's *If on a Winter's Night*) 'sometimes discourage participation . . . by prominently declaring or displaying their fictionality, betraying their own pretense' (Walton 1990, p. 225). But this does not discourage participation, it merely enlarges it to include the narrator with his reminders that we are reading a fiction. The narrator complicates, enriches the fiction of which he is a part.

- 41 M.C. Bradbrook, *Themes & Conventions of Elizabethan Tragedy* (Cambridge, 1935; 1960), p. 4. See also E.E. Stoll, *Art and Artifice in Shakespeare: A Study in Dramatic Contrast and Illusion* (Cambridge, 1933); A.C. Sprague, *Shakespeare and the Audience. A Study in the Technique of Exposition* (Cambridge, Mass., 1935), pp. 59-96: 'Some Conventions'; S.L. Bethell, *Shakespeare and the Popular Dramatic Tradition* (London, 1944). A valuable recent study, emphasising conventions in performance, is Alan D. Dessen, *Elizabethan Stage Conventions and Modern Interpreters* (Cambridge, 1984).
- 42 *Henslowe's Diary*, ed. R.A. Foakes and R.T. Rickert (Cambridge, 1961), pp. 317-25.
- 43 For a useful survey, see Doran 1954, pp. 218-58.
- 44 See, e.g., Ian Maclean, *The Renaissance Notion of Woman. A study in the fortunes of scholasticism and medical science in European intellectual life* (Cambridge, 1980).
- 45 See, e.g., Leonardo Bruni, in *De studiis et literis* (c. 1405), addressed to Baptista di Montefeltro, arguing that 'the great and complex art of Rhetoric' is of no use to a woman: 'To her neither the intricacies of debate nor the oratorical artifices of

action and delivery are of the least practical use, if indeed they are not positively unbecoming': tr. W.H. Woodward, *Vittorino da Feltrè and other Humanist Educators* (Cambridge, 1897, 1912), p. 126.

- 46 Similarly Thomas Hardy, in his essay 'The Dorsetshire Labourer' (1883), describing the custom by which agricultural workers moved from one tied cottage to another on quarter-days, when their contracts were terminated or transferred, depicted the removal process as a light-hearted affair: 'the day of removal, if fine, wears an aspect of jollity, and the whole proceeding is a blithe one' (*Thomas Hardy's Personal Writings*, ed. H. Orel (London, 1967), p. 179). But in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891), chapter LI, the move of Tess's family is portrayed — in line with the tragic intention of the whole novel — as an experience of failure and defeat.
- 47 Cambridge, Mass., 1990. Page-references incorporated in the text.
- 48 'Reading the *Oresteia* makes one afraid for one's life': Vickers 1973, p. 425.
- 49 The only review that I have seen so far (by Sebastian Gardner in the *TLS* for 26 April 1991, p. 14), observes that 'so many demands are loaded on to Walton's notion of make-believe that this highly stretched term loses its natural plasticity, and becomes effectively equivalent to "imagines in some way" . . .'. So 'it is the more specific forms of imaginative life and notions of representation — of . . . discerning the content of a painting, making up a story, and so on — that do the real explanatory work, and feed Walton's notion of make-believe with meaning, rather than vice versa.' Instead of 'a single, across-the-board concept', then, we should consider 'a plurality of local concepts'. Gardner nevertheless praises Walton's book as providing 'a superb canonical framework' for the analysis of artistic representation, his theory of make-believe making it 'a strong

- candidate for the best account of literary-fictional representation'.
- 50 In Borges, *Labyrinths. Selected Stories & Other Writings*, ed. D.A. Yates and J.E. Irby, 2nd ed. (New York, 1964), p. 248.
- 51 'Life of Milton', in *Lives of Poets*, World's Classics edition, 2 vols. (London, 1952), Vol. 1, p. 88.
- 52 *The Road to Xanadu. A Study in the Ways of the Imagination* (Boston and New York, 1927; rev.ed., 1930).
- 53 See A.T. Kitchel, *Quarry for Middlemarch*, supplement to *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 4 (1950).
- 54 See, e.g., Don Gifford, *'Ulysses' Annotated*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley, Cal., 1988).
- 55 See E. Magee, *Richard Wagner and the Nibelungs* (Oxford, 1991).
- 56 Letter of 13 December 1898, cit. Norman Sherry, *Conrad's Eastern World* (Cambridge, 1966), pp. 139-40.
- 57 See, e.g., H. Levin, *The Gates of Horn. A Study of Five French Realists* (New York, 1966), pp. 292-301; and A.J. Krailsheimer's excellent Penguin translation, *Boward and Pécuchet* (Harmondsworth, 1976).
- 58 See, e.g., L.M. Bernucci, *Historia de un Malentendido. Un Estudio Trans-textual de 'La Guerra del Fin del Mundo'* (New York, 1989). I owe this reference to Sabine Köllmann.
- 59 See the classic study by T.W. Baldwin, *Shakespeare's 'Small Latine and Lesse Greeke'*, 2 vols. (Urbana, Ill., 1944, 1966).
- 60 See, e.g., J.W. Lever, 'Shakespeare's French Fruits', *Shakespeare Survey* 6 (1953): pp. 79-90.
- 61 See, e.g., A.S. Cairncross, 'Shakespeare and Ariosto: *Much Ado About Nothing*, *King Lear*, and *Othello*', *Renaissance Quarterly* 29 (1976): pp. 176-82.
- 62 8 volumes, London and Boston, 1957-1975.
- 63 *Feeling and Form. A Theory of Art* (New York, 1953), p. 364.
- 64 See Weinberg, *op.cit.* in note 34; also Brian Vickers, 'Rhetoric and Poetics', in *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, ed. C.B. Schmitt and Q. Skinner (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 715-45.
- 65 See Weinberg, *op.cit.* in note 34, and B. Hathaway, *The Age of Criticism* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1962).
- 66 See Leo Salinger, *Shakespeare and the Traditions of Comedy* (Cambridge, 1974).
- 67 On academic drama see F.S. Boas, *University Drama in the Tudor Age* (Oxford, 1914); G.C. Moore Smith, *College Plays Performed in the University of Cambridge* (Cambridge, 1923).
- 68 Binns, *Intellectual Culture in Elizabethan and Jacobean England. The Latin Writings of the Age* (Leeds, 1990).
- 69 On collaboration see Bentley 1986, pp. 197-234, and Chillington 1980 (although her argument that 'Hand D' in the ms. of *Sir Thomas More* is the writing of Webster, not Shakespeare, has received very little support: see G.R. Proudfoot in Wells 1990, p. 390). For the plausible arguments of Roger Holdsworth that Shakespeare and Middleton collaborated in *Timon of Athens* see S. Wells and G. Taylor, *William Shakespeare. A Textual Companion* (Oxford, 1987), pp. 127-8, 501-7, which I welcomed in *Review of English Studies* 40 (1989), pp. 406-7.
- 70 For a basic list of books on Renaissance literary and dramatic theory see Brian Vickers, Bibliographical Appendix to *The Age of Shakespeare*, ed. Boris Ford (Harmondsworth, rev.ed. 1991), pp. 499-576, at pp. 522-4, especially the works by Smith, Spingarn, Herrick, Klein, Stroup, and Weinberg.
- 71 See M.W. Black, 'The Sources of Shakespeare's *Richard II*', in J.G. McManaway et al. (edd.) *Joseph Quincy Adams Memorial Studies* (Washington, D.C., 1948), pp. 199-216, at pp. 212-13 ('Shakespeare looked first at the marginal notes'). See also the stimulating discussion of 'Shakespeare At Work: Preparing, Writing, Rewriting' by

- E.A.J. Honigmann, *Myriad-Minded Shakespeare* (London, 1989), pp. 188-221, and other comments on the sources elsewhere (subject to some reservations I made in *Modern Philology* 89 (1991): pp. 106-109).
- 72 Max Bluestone, *From Story to Stage: The Dramatic Adaptation of Prose Fiction in the Period of Shakespeare and His Contemporaries* (The Hague, 1974).
- 73 See Muriel Bradbrook, 'What Shakespeare did to Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*', repr. in Bradbrook, *The Artist and Society in Shakespeare's England* (Brighton, 1982), pp. 133-43.
- 74 See A. Harbage, *As They Liked It: A Study of Shakespeare's Moral Artistry* (New York, 1947), p. xiii.
- 75 See R. Levin, *The Multiple Plot in English Renaissance Drama* (Chicago, 1971), with an Appendix on 'The Double Plot in Roman Comedy', pp. 225-45.
- 76 See, e.g., Salinger, *op.cit.* in note 66, pp. 65-7, 207-208, 253-6, 307-309.
- 77 John Lyly, *The Humanist As Courtier* (London, 1962), ch.vi: 'Lyly and Shakespeare', pp. 298-349.
- 78 Bullough VII: 299. See *ibid.*, pp. 414-20, for some excerpts from Harsnett. He is also discussed in Muir 1961, pp. 147-61.
- 79 For his use of Pliny's *Natural History* and the self-defence by C. Furius Cresius, see Muir 1961, pp. 127-8; Bullough VII: 211.
- 80 Bullough VII: 216, 230; and Ned B. Allen, 'The Two Parts of *Othello*', *Shakespeare Survey* 21 (1968): pp. 13-29.
- York Review (21 Nov. 1991, pp. 39-44), did not approve of Lehman's analysis of deconstruction but had to agree with his diagnosis of the deplorable reaction of American deconstructionists to the revelation of de Man's collaborationist journalism, showing that the deconstructive method was not 'the slightest help to its practitioners and defenders' either to establish what de Man had actually meant in these writings (which they distorted to give the most favourable picture), or to make an ethical judgement of them.
- 3 See, in my bibliography, Abrams 1977; Abrams 1979, and Abrams 1986, all collected in, and cited from Abrams 1989.
- 4 See, in the bibliography, Graff 1979, Graff 1980, and Graff 1981.
- 5 See Donoghue 1980, Donoghue 1981.
- 6 See Searle 1977, a critique of Derrida's essay in the same volume of *Glyph* (Derrida 1977), to which Derrida replied a year later in an article called 'Limited Inc a b c . . .', *Glyph* 2 (1978): pp. 162-254, a bloated and inspissated self-defence which reminds one of the squid, when injured, emitting a cloud of black ink. Searle discussed Derrida again in the *New York Review* (Searle 1983; with a reply: Searle 1984). I remember being in America when this review-essay appeared, and hearing it described by colleagues teaching literature as an underhand piece of work, written out of personal malice, just to 'get even with Derrida'. These are, all too often, the terms in which supporters of deconstruction describe its critics. So Said imagines that Foucault's criticisms of Derrida derive from 'personal animus' (Said 1983, pp. 212-13). Searle's essay is balanced, critical, and quite lacking in personal animus. All the more regrettable, then, that neither his 1977 nor 1983 evaluations of Derrida are cited by later critics, such as Graff, Abrams, and Said. On Derrida's deplorably
- Chapter Three: Deconstruction
- 1 *Deconstructive Criticism* (New York, 1983), p. ix; cit. Ellis 1989, p. 88.
- 2 *Signs of the Times. Deconstruction and the Fall of Paul de Man* (New York, 1991), especially pp. 131-268. Louis Menand, reviewing it for the *New*

- violent response to those who criticised his attempt to exculpate de Man for his anti-Semitic journalism, a self-justifying exercise which simply heaped abuse on those who disagreed with him, see Lehmann 1991, pp. 234-9, 252-8.
- 7 See Butler 1984.
- 8 See Lentricchia 1980, pp. 72-9, 122-3, 159-77 for enthusiastic endorsements of Derrida, and pp. 188-210 for even warmer words on Foucault. But see pp. 121, 177-88 for critical comments on the Yale Derridians, especially pp. 281-317 for a highly ambivalent evaluation of de Man. The ambivalence soon yielded to unequivocal condemnation of the 'insidious effect' of de Man's work in producing 'the paralysis of praxis itself': see Lentricchia 1983, pp. 38-52. The new hero is Kenneth Burke.
- 9 Said wrote a largely favourable survey of the new Paris critics, 'Abecedarium *Culturæ*: Absence, Writing, Statement, Discourse, Archeology, Structuralism', in *TriQuarterly* 20 (1971), pp. 33-71; reprinted in Said 1975, pp. 277-343. But in his later collection, *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Said 1983), it is instructive to follow the growing disillusionment through four essays, 'Roads Taken and Not Taken in Contemporary Criticism' (pp. 140-57; originally in *Contemporary Literature*, 1976); 'Reflections on American "Left" Literary Criticism' (pp. 158-77; originally in *Boundary*, 1979); 'Criticism Between Culture and System' (pp. 178-225); originally in *Critical Inquiry* 4 (1978) as 'The Problem of Textuality: Two Exemplary Positions'; and 'Traveling Theory' (pp. 226-47; originally in *Raritan*, 1982), and from there to the Introduction (pp. 1-30). Written for this collection in 1983, this essay on 'Secular Criticism' reveals a major loss of sympathy, especially with 'textuality' as a concept outside history, outside political engagement in the real world (pp. 3-5), and with critical systems that have hardened into dogma (pp. 28-30).
- 10 See Fischer 1985 (together with Altieri 1979, Scholes 1988); Harris 1988; Tallis 1988 (a wide-ranging book with detailed critiques of Derrida and Lacan, which unfortunately lapses at times into sarcastic dismissal); and Ellis 1989, a lucid and penetrating study, which deserves to become required reading on all courses teaching contemporary literary theory.
- 11 See Timpanaro 1975; Anderson 1983.
- 12 See Descombes 1980; Descombes 1986.
- 13 See Clarke 1981; Merquior 1986a; Merquior 1985.
- 14 See Frank 1989.
- 15 See Dews 1987.
- 16 See Pavel 1989.
- 17 For an (at this point in his reading) sympathetic account of Derrida's concept of *écriture double*, see Said 1983, pp. 185-207.
- 18 See, e.g., J. Schäfer, *Documentation in the O.E.D.: Shakespeare and Nashe as Test Cases* (Oxford, 1980); *Early Modern English Lexicography*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1990).
- 19 See, e.g., Skinner 1988, pp. 114-16 and 119-32, a devastating review (1979) of Raymond Williams's *Keywords* (1976), which resulted in its second edition (1983) being largely rewritten (p. 312, n. 1); Brian Vickers, 'Leisure and idleness in the Renaissance: the ambivalence of *otium*', *Renaissance Studies* 4 (1990): pp. 1-37 and 107-54.
- 20 See, e.g., Graff 1980, p. 419; Butler 1984, pp. 79-80; Ellis 1989, p. 126.
- 21 Pavel 1989, p. 15.
- 22 See Lentricchia 1980, pp. 76-7 and *passim*; Cain 1979, pp. 381-2; Fischer 1985, pp. xi-xiii, 83-109. Lentricchia 1983, p. 38, states that de Man's two collections of essays, *Blindness & Insight* (1971) and *Allegories of Reading* (1979); 'provided a reading-machine' for his disciples: the models of deconstructive strategy, the terminology, the idea of literature and literary history', even a 'prose style'.
- 23 See, e.g., Graff 1979, pp. 173-5; Graff 1980, pp. 405, 409; Lentricchia 1980, p. 301; Ellis 1989, p. 65 ('For since meaning is an aspect of a sign, can it mean anything to say that sign and meaning do not coincide?').
- 24 See, e.g., Donoghue 1980, pp. 38-9; Graff 1980, pp. 413-15; Fischer 1985, pp. 65-76, a collective documentation of omissions and misreadings that will surprise readers who have heard of deconstruction's reputation for close textual scrutiny. The gap between normal critics and the hagiography applied to de Man by other deconstructionists is enormous. Hillis Miller has judged that 'the millennium would come, if all men and women became good readers in de Man's sense': *Ethics of Reading* (New York, 1986), p. 58.
- 25 As Denis Donoghue wittily observed, 'Derrida seems to get as much vigor from a state of suspicion as naive people get from a state of certitude. Rendering certain places of the mind uninhabitable, he derives satisfaction from the integrity of achieving this result. De Man's mind is so ascetic that it thrives without joy, it finds no pleasure in the suspicion which is as near Derrida comes to a principle' (Donoghue 1981, p. 185). Many of de Man's essays gain, as Donoghue puts it, a purely Pyrrhic victory (*ibid.*), attaining no more than what de Man himself calls a 'state of suspended ignorance' (de Man 1979a, p. 19).
- 26 Denis Donoghue bluntly commented: 'I don't understand this: De Man, implacable in denying to the poet any active power, is evidently willing to ascribe an "act" to "language"; he apparently does this merely for the satisfaction of reporting that the "acts" of language are mechanical, arbitrary, and repetitive' (Donoghue 1980, p. 38).
- 27 See, e.g., Donoghue 1980, pp. 172-86; Jeffrey Barnouw, reviewing *Allegories of Reading, Comparative Literature Studies* 19 (1982): pp. 459-63; Butler 1984, pp. 68-70.
- 28 *New York Review of Books*, 1 March 1990, p. 40. See also that journal, 24 June 1989; pp. 32-7, for a review-essay by Denis Donoghue, 'The Strange Case of Paul de Man', suggesting some links between his anti-Semitic journalism and his later criticism. A more pointed connection was made by Stanley Corngold in a letter to the *TLS*, 26 August 1988, p. 931. For further commentary on the violent oppositions in de Man's thought, see Corngold, 'Error in Paul de Man', *Critical Inquiry* 8 (1982): pp. 489-507, and my essay, 'Deconstruction's Designs on Rhetoric', in W.B. Horner and M. Leff (edd.), *A Festschrift for J.J. Murphy* (forthcoming).
- 29 See, e.g., *The World as Will and Representation*, tr. E.J. Payne, 2 vols. (London, 1958; New York, 1966) I, pp. 275, 279, 352-3, 409-12 (the last word of the main text is 'nothing'); II, pp. 198, 288, 463-4, 474-7, 487, 497, 501, 508, 580, 612.
- 30 Miller's Presidential lecture, 'The Triumph of Theory, the Resistance to Reading, and the Question of the Material Base' appeared in *PMLA* 102 (1987): pp. 281-91. Another address delivered to university English departments pleading on behalf of deconstruction to be introduced in the teaching of English (misleadingly equated with 'rhetoric', as if the prestige of the older subject could legitimise the new by association), 'The Function of Rhetorical Study at the Present Time', is reprinted in J. Engell and D. Perkins (edd.) *Teaching Literature* (Cambridge, Mass., 1988), pp. 87-109. For a brief critique of Miller's proposal to make deconstruction a part of both undergraduate and graduate curricula, see Abrams 1986, pp. 328-32.
- 31 *The Arte of English Poesie*, ed. G.D. Willcock and A. Walker

- (Cambridge, 1936, 1970), pp. 191-2.
- 32 See, e.g., *Charles Dickens: The World of His Novels* (Cambridge, Mass., 1958); *The Disappearance of God: Five Nineteenth-Century Writers* (Cambridge, Mass., 1963).
- 33 For Miller's Wordsworth interpretation see his essay, 'On Edge: The Crossways of Contemporary Criticism' (1979), reprinted in *Romanticism and Contemporary Criticism*, ed. M. Eaves and M. Fischer (Ithaca, N.Y., 1986), pp. 96-110. The most thorough (and devastating) discussion of this essay is in Abrams 1986, pp. 314-28. Miller's essay on Pater (Miller 1976b) has been given extended analysis by Wendell Harris (Harris 1988, pp. 171-9), who shows how Miller endorses Derrida's theory of language's indeterminacy by using two interpretive strategies. The first is a wilful manipulation of Pater's text, involving an 'arbitrary truncation of lines of thought' in Pater to produce the desired result: 'the aporia at which Miller arrives is created in part by choosing to ignore links that can easily be made between various of Pater's key concepts'. The other trick (much used in Miller's Wordsworth essay) is to import 'analogues, parallels, or associations unauthorized by anything in the text, in effect denying that the structure of the text constitutes an internal context that limits possible meanings and relationships'. This move is intended to shatter the unity of the text under analysis in order to 'deny that unity and coherence are guiding principles for the interpretation' of any text: a circular argument, obviously enough, but if such a strategy persuades the writer it will no doubt persuade many of his readers.
- 34 See, e.g., Cain 1979, pp. 371-81; Ellis 1989, p. 79 note.
- 35 Descombes 1981, p. 79; Lehman 1991, p. 23.
- 36 See *Orlando Furioso*, Book XV, stanzas 14, 38, 53; XX, 88; XXII, 10-31; XXXIII, 125; XLIV, 25, etc.
- I quote from the excellent prose version by Guido Waldman (Oxford, 1974), pp. 239, 257-8.
- 37 On deconstruction as power-play see Donoghue 1980, p. 41; Searle 1983, p. 77; and Scholes 1988, pp. 284-5. The burden of other complaints, however, has been that while deconstruction seeks (and gains) power in the academy, it is oblivious to the wider political situations that confront us all. For one example of this criticism I choose Wendell Harris, discussing the degree to which 'consciousness of the interpretive process can help one towards the critical analysis of political significances'. Deconstruction, he shows, gives no help at all, for 'the same deconstructive techniques that one uses to undermine an assumption or argument can be used to undermine the deconstructive manoeuvre one has just employed. Precisely because deconstruction denies the possibility of closure, it can lead down the garden path of an infinite series of reversals. The more serious one's interest in the political significance of a text, the more readily will deconstruction prove a betrayer' (Harris 1988, p. 29).
- 38 Hawkes, 'Shakespeare and New Critical Approaches', in S. Wells (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare Studies* (Cambridge, 1985, 1991), pp. 287-302; page-references incorporated in the text. The comparable chapter in *Shakespeare. A Bibliographical Guide*, also ed. S. Wells (Oxford, rev. ed. 1990), pp. 405-28, by Jonathan Dollimore, is an in-group puff for 'Cultural Materialism', Gender studies (especially of the marginalised), and 'New Historicism'. See my notice in *Review of English Studies* 54 (May 1993).
- 39 From this collection (Drakakis 1985) I shall discuss the essay listed in my bibliography as Evans 1985.
- 40 From this collection (Atkins and Bergeron 1988) I shall discuss the essays listed in my bibliography as Atkins 1988, Waller 1988, Kopper

- 1988, de Sousa 1988, and Goldberg 1988. This seems to me the weakest of these volumes, as if the critical theory it represented were already exhausted.
- 41 I quote directly from this collection (Felperin 1990). Felperin earlier published *Beyond Deconstruction. Uses and Abuses of Literary Theory* (Oxford, 1985), to which, strangely enough, he never refers in this latest study.
- 42 'Aporia: state of indeterminate boundaries in French North America. Population: shifting. Capital: Derridon. Industry: deconstruction. Applications for visas: Mise en Abyme, 47 Boulevard de Man'.
- 43 Clough to Emerson in 1848: see R.K. Biswas, *Arthur Hughes Clough. Towards a Reconsideration* (Oxford, 1972), p. 151.
- 44 On Hawkes's misreading of Saussure see Tallis 1988, pp. 65, 70-79, 86-7 (on 'the insistent authority typical of all his sweeping statements', including a 'startling volte-face'), 96, 99, 126-7; and Ellis 1989, pp. 19, 63-4 (showing 'the depths of conceptual confusion', a 'misconception so fundamental as to be disabling').
- 45 See Brian Vickers, 'Rhetoric and Feeling in Shakespeare's Sonnets', in K. Elam (ed.) *Shakespeare Today: Directions and Methods of Research* (Florence, 1984), pp. 53-98.
- 46 For a perceptive analysis of this speech by Edward Capell in 1780 see Brian Vickers (ed.) *Shakespeare: The Critical Heritage, vol. 6, 1774-1801* (London and Boston, 1981), pp. 246-7. Capell writes that Troilus calls the "discourse" of his reason, passing inwardly, and setting up arguments (*causes*) with and against itself. . . "madness" and a "bifold (two-fold) authority"; and then proceeds to lay down (explain it is not) wherein this *bi-foldness* lay, in this strange manner: "where reason can revolt / without perdition. . .". At this point Capell gives up the attempt (*Davus sum, non Oedipus*), but returns to define the 'inseparable
- thing*' of line 152 as 'the speaker's union with Cressida, which he thought was inseparable, but finds now, by a fight commenc'd in his soul, that there is *division* made in it which is' both vast and imperceptible. 'This enigma he solves by calling for instances; and finds one in his heart which tells him that Cressida is still his, and so no separation; another in his remembrance of what had but just pass'd, that contradicts his heart and makes division unmeasurable. Passion, labouring to express itself strongly, is the cause of this intricacy, and withal of that beautiful pleonasm at the speech's conclusion, which sets Diomed's conquest in a light so disgusting.'
- 47 On Arachne's woof see Ovid, *Metamorphoses* VI, 1-145.
- 48 Aristotle on hyperbole: *Rhetoric*, 1413a28ff.
- 49 On the unreliability of witches see, e.g., Reginald Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584), Book XIII, ch. 15: 'How men have been abused with words of equivocation. . .', and *Macbeth*, 1.3.130ff, with editorial annotations.
- 50 See, e.g., Joseph Fontenrose, *The Delphic Oracle; Its Responses and Operations* (Berkeley, Cal., 1978); M.P. Nilsson, *Cults, Myths, Oracles and Politics in Ancient Greece* (Lund, 1951); H.W. Parke and D.E.W. Wormell, *The Delphic Oracle*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1956).
- 51 See Vickers 1973, pp. 328-36.
- 52 A cipher is a zero, which increases the value of the figures preceding it, as the Chorus says in *Henry V*:
And let us, ciphers to this great accmpt,
On your' imaginary forces work.
(*Prolog.* 17)
- The Riverside edition glosses Polixenes' 'cipher' as 'i.e. having no value in itself, yet capable of multiplying the value of the numbers that stand before it'.
- 53 For commentary on the affected style of this scene see Vickers 1968, pp. 422-5.

- 54 These are the annotations in the Riverside edition of G.B. Evans (Boston, 1974). More detail in the New Arden edition of J.H. Pafford (London, 1963).
- 55 See Brian Vickers, 'Analogy Versus Identity: The Rejection of Occult Symbolism, 1580-1680', in B. Vickers (ed.) *Occult and Scientific Mentalities in the Renaissance* (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 95-163.
- 56 *William Shakspeare's Small Latine & Lesse Greeke*, 2 vols. (Urbana, Ill., 1944, 1966), especially Vol. II, chs. 38-41, pp. 239-416; page-references incorporated in the text. It is disappointing that neither of the full-length editions of *Love's Labour's Lost* so far published, by R.W. David for the New Arden edition (1951) and G.R. Hibbard for the New Oxford edition (1990) makes use of Baldwin, a mine of information on Elizabethan grammar schools and the teaching of Latin, logic, and rhetoric.
- 57 See, e.g., the influential Spanish humanist Vives, in *De tradendis disciplinis* (1531), Book IV, ch. iv, describing *imitatio* as 'the fashioning of a certain thing in accordance with a proposed model'. Vives lays down several cautions: 'what is imitated always remains behind the original', so 'the more models we have and the less likeness there is between them, the greater is the progress of eloquence'. To 'attain good imitation there is need of a quick and keen judgment, as well as a certain natural and hidden dexterity'. Successful imitation reveals 'the goodness of the natural disposition', unimaginative copying shows 'slowness of judgment', while too close imitation results in theft. The crucial point is that by imitating other authors, a writer develops his own style. This whole chapter expresses an important part of Renaissance literary theory, pedantically invoked by Holofernes: *Vives on Education*, tr. Foster Watson (Cambridge, 1913), pp. 189-200.
- 58 Jonson, *Works* (ed. cit.), Vol. VIII, pp. 635-40. On the two senses of imitation in the Renaissance see, e.g., B. Weinberg, *A History of Literary Criticism in the Italian Renaissance*, 2 vols. (Chicago, 1961): the Platonic-Aristotelian concept involves *mimesis* of an object or event in the external world (vol. 1, pp. 24-6, 51, 60-62, 117, etc.), and the 'Ciceronian' or 'Horatian' one involves *imitatio* of a literary model (vol. 1, pp. 60-62, 91, 100-104, 117, 146-7, etc.).
- 59 See, e.g., Sister Miriam Joseph, *Shakespeare's Use of the Arts of Language* (New York, 1947), on 'Vices of Language', pp. 64-78, 299-304.
- 60 Evans cites in a note here Derrida's claim that writing precedes thought as an "arche-writing... which I continue to call writing only because it essentially communicates with the vulgar-concept of writing" (p. 228, n. 4). — 'O base and obscure vulgar!', as Armado scornfully exclaims (*Love's Labour's Lost*, 4.1.67).

Chapter Four: New Historicism

- 1 *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, I.1, in, e.g., abridged ed. A.S. McGrade and Brian Vickers (London, 1975) pp. 107-108.
- 2 Louis Montrose accords the priority to Michael McCandles in an essay for *Diacritics* in 1980: Montrose 1989, p. 32 n. 6.
- 3 See, e.g., Donald Kelley, *Foundations of Modern Historical Scholarship. Language, Law, and History in the French Renaissance* (New York, 1970), pp. 4-8.
- 4 I have read, and shall probably refer to, the following works (for full titles see the bibliography): Montrose 1986; Howard 1986; Cohen 1987; Pechter 1987; Fowler 1988; Lentricchia 1988; Veaser 1989 — incorporating the essays designated in the bibliography

- as Lentricchia 1989 (reprinting Lentricchia 1988), Montrose 1989, Gallagher 1989, Fineman 1989, Newton 1989, Graff 1989, Thomas 1989, Pecora 1989; Spivak 1989, White 1989; Felperin 1990; Barton 1991.
- 5 Montrose 1986, pp. 7 (n. 4), 11; Montrose 1989, pp. 18, 25: substituting 'commodified' for 'future-oriented'. Perhaps 'futures' in the stock exchange sense would be more appropriate? New Historicism, Deconstruction, Cultural Materialism, could be quoted alongside 'forward trading' in copper, gold, pork bellies.
- 6 See Barzun 1974. Other writers have commented on New Historicism as 'one merchandisable rubric amongst others in the not so free marketplace of academic ideas...' (Fineman 1989, p. 51), or as 'the latest fad...' (At least it is not advertised as tasting great or being less filling.): Thomas 1989, p. 187.
- 7 Frank Lentricchia has over-trumped that move, finding Greenblatt to have the same basic attitude to literature as Hippolyte Taine (Lentricchia 1988, pp. 86-90), as if to say 'New Presbyter is but old priest writ large'.
- 8 This charge has been made by Howard Felperin, a deconstructionist (Felperin 1990, pp. 183, 188-9), and by any number of embittered feminists: see my Epilogue below, pp. 433ff).
- 9 So Montrose concedes that 'recent theories of textuality have argued persuasively that the referent of a linguistic sign cannot be fixed; that the meaning of a text cannot be stabilized. At the same time', he defensively adds, 'writing and reading are always historically and socially determinate events, performed in the world and upon the world by gendered individual and collective human agents'. Unconcerned by the incompatibility of these two positions, he summarises: 'We may simultaneously acknowledge the theoretical indeterminacy of the signifying process and the historical specificity of discursive practices — acts of speaking, writing, and interpreting': Montrose 1989, p. 23. But what if all the 'gendered individuals' you study, apart from the recent few who have read and believed Derrida, regard their discursive practices as in fact determinate, reliably able to communicate meaning and purpose? And what if they have good reasons for thinking so? For a similar attempt to reconcile divergent positions see Felperin 1990, pp. vi-xii.
- 10 See, e.g., Fowler 1988, p. 968; Gallagher 1989, p. 43: 'in the mid-seventies... Michel Foucault's work appeared [in English], addressing exactly the issues that preoccupied us'. Victoria Kahn has commented on the New Historicist 'obligatory citations' of Foucault as 'establishing a shared sense of obligatory critical reading as well as a store-house of commonly accepted conclusions. (Hence a reference to Foucault is taken to be sufficient to establish the existence of specifically modern "techniques of the subject" or of a specifically bourgeois form of subjectivity): review in *Shakespeare Quarterly* 38 (1987): p. 527. Later she describes 'the ambiguities of some New Historical work' as being 'due in part to the overwhelming authority of Foucault', the 'historical fuzziness' produced by his thesis about 'the death of the author' resulting in a 'dehistoricized' view of the past (p. 530).
- 11 See, e.g., Montrose, 'Gifts and Reasons: The Context of Peele's *Araygnment of Paris*', *ELH* 47 (1980): pp. 433-61, and 'Eliza, Queene of Shepheardes', and the 'Pastoral of Power', *English Literary Renaissance* 10 (1980): pp. 153-82.
- 12 See, e.g., Said 1983, p. 221, on Foucault taking 'a curiously passive and sterile view... of how and why power is gained, used, and held onto', a criticism developed further

- on pp. 244-6; and Lentricchia 1988, pp. 30-31, 67-70, 74-86, especially p. 69: 'Foucault's theory of power, because it gives power to anyone, everywhere, at all times, and to no one, nowhere, no time, provided a means of resistance but no real goals for resistance... making resistance ever-possible and ever-meaningless', a theory that 'courts a monolithic determinism' and hence 'despair' (p. 70). It is significant that Lentricchia repeatedly applies the term 'paranoid' (pp. 31, 68, 92), and judges Foucault's system 'the most thoroughgoing argument that I have read against Marx's hope for radical social change' (p. 86), a 'depressing message' (p. 92). Cf. also Frederick Crews on Foucault's switch, after 1968, to 'more drastic Nietzschean "genealogies" reducing all truth claims to exercises of power. The attractive new ingredient in Foucault's thought was Sixties paranoia toward the all-hidden, all-powerful oppressors whom he never attempted to identify': Crews 1986, p. 177 n. 11.
- 13 See the confrontation (in 1971) between Foucault and Noam Chomsky for a Dutch TV series on contemporary philosophy, in Fons Elders (ed.), *Reflexive Water. The Basic Concerns of Mankind* (London, 1974): 'Human Nature: Justice versus Power', pp. 135-197, especially pp. 174-188, and Said 1983, pp. 245-6.
- 14 Veeseer thinks, for instance, that 'humanists' have aspired to 'the norm of disembodied objectivity' (Veeseer 1989, p. ix), an unrecognisable claim; that 'conventional scholars' have built up a 'profoundly anti-intellectualist ethos', and that New Historicism is 'the first successful counterattack in decades' on 'this quasi-monastic order. In response, the platoons of traditionalists have predictably rushed to their guns' (the first we have heard of armed monasteries); and that those who comment on the 'note found among Nietzsche's papers to the effect that
- "I have lost my umbrella" — that is, Derrida — can be included among New Historicists (p. xi). Veeseer, master of the muddled metaphor, describes the notions of 'autonomous self and text' as 'mere holograms, effects that intersecting institutions produce' (p. xiii); speculates on 'the degree to which a text successfully erases its practical social function' (p. xi) — so how would you know? and reports that 'New Historicism... has had to plunge ahead just to keep itself erect' (*ibid.*). Veeseer is not in a strong position to criticise journalists (p. x).
- 15 See, e.g., J. Goldberg, *James I and the Politics of Literature* (Baltimore, Md., 1983); S. Orgel, 'The Royal Theatre and the Role of King', in G.F. Lytle and S. Orgel (ed.), *Patronage in the Renaissance* (Princeton, N.J., 1981), pp. 261-73, and 'Making Greatness Familiar' in D.M. Bergeron (ed.), *Pageantry in the Shakespearean Theater* (Athens, Ga., 1985), pp. 22-23.
- 16 Joseph Conrad, *Under Western Eyes*, ed. J. Hawthorn (Oxford, 1983), p. 294.
- 17 One of the few critics to have commented on the anachronisms in New Historicism (and Cultural Materialist) literary theory is Richard Levin. See Levin 1990b, a concise account of five such fallacies, totalising claims that Elizabethan dramatists did not use characters as foils; that the Renaissance did not have a concept of theatrical illusion, had no category of literature, did not connect gender with biology, and had no conception of the self as autonomous and unified. These are transparent examples of projecting late twentieth-century categories backwards.
- 18 The sub-title of Greenblatt's latest collection of essays (Greenblatt 1990) is 'Essays in Early Modern Culture'. To some readers 'early modern' might seem just a neutral historiographical term, but for others it already carries an ideological significance. Derek Attridge recently

- commented approvingly on a book he was reviewing that in its title 'the term "Renaissance" is displaced by "Early Modern Europe"', implying a tension between an encomiastic and an objective approach, between... a Eurocentric and a global perspective, and between a cyclical and a linear view of history. In spite of the parturitive metaphor, "Renaissance" points, with a few notable exceptions, to male achievements within the dominant social and economic class; "early modern" opens up a much wider, and less immediately glamorous, field': *Renaissance Quarterly* 40 (1987), pp. 810-11. This distinction is ideologically, rather than rationally motivated. I know of no serious scholar who uses the term 'Renaissance' with encomiastic, Eurocentric, cyclical, patriarchal, or glamorous connotations, but I look forward to new historical work embodying all the opposite qualities.
- 19 In his first paragraph Burckhardt writes that he is 'treating of a civilization which is the mother of our own, and whose influence is still at work on us': *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, tr. S.G.C. Middlemore (London, 1965), p. 1. For critiques of Burckhardt see, e.g., Johan Huizinga, 'The Problem of the Renaissance' in *Men and Ideas. History, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance*, tr. J.S. Home and H. van Marle (New York, 1959), pp. 243-287; E.H. Gombrich, *In Search of Cultural History* (Oxford, 1969); and Robert Klein, 'Burckhardt's Civilization of the Renaissance Today' in *Form and Meaning. Essays on the Renaissance and Modern Art*, tr. M. Jay and L. Wieseltier (New York, 1979), pp. 25-42.
- 20 But perhaps this is just a consequence of the Foucauldian influence rooting New Historicism inescapably in the present. Perhaps the New Historicist medievalist sees the Middle Ages rather as the source of the problems of the modern world, while the New
- Historicist working on the eighteenth century attaches blame to the Augustans...
- 21 See Pecora 1989, also A. Biersack, 'Local Knowledge, Local History: Geertz and Beyond', in Lynn Hunt (ed.), *The New Cultural History* (Berkeley, Cal., 1989), pp. 72-96.
- 22 Yet, surprisingly enough, Geertz goes on to deny cultural interpretation any integrative or cumulative dimension: 'Rather than following a rising curve of cumulative findings, cultural analysis breaks up into a disconnected yet coherent sequence of bolder and bolder sorties...' (p. 25). This strange abandoning of cultural analysis as being 'inherently incomplete', producing only more precise disagreement, has not been taken up by the New Historicists, so I shall not discuss it further, only recording my disagreement with it.
- 23 In a recent essay Greenblatt quotes this remark by Cohen and finds it 'fascinating... that concerns like these should have come to seem bizarre...' (Greenblatt 1990, p. 169). But he does not answer Cohen's critique of the uses to which such material is put.
- 24 Review in *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 38 (1987): pp. 249-53, at p. 251.
- 25 Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, tr. R. Nice (Cambridge, 1977), p. 195. See also Bourdieu's essay 'Symbolic Capital', *Critique of Anthropology* 4 (1979): pp. 77-85. Two French commentators note that 'Bourdieu désigne par "capital symbolique" les propriétés matérielles lorsqu'elles sont perçues et appropriées comme des propriétés de distinction (l'appartenance à tel club de golf, etc.)': Ferry and Renaut 1985, p. 213 note.
- 26 See G.G. Smith (ed.), *Elizabethan Critical Essays*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1904, 1964), I. p. 201 and 2. p. 148, which gives the correct reference to Aristotle's *Rhetoric*: 3.11.2, not 3.2.2., as Greenblatt has it.
- 27 Sidney 1965, pp. 137-8 and note

- p. 226, defining it as 'the power of representing the subject matter clearly', and referring 'not to the words used in presenting the subject but to the vivid mental apprehension of things themselves'. For Scaliger, see *Poetices Libri Septem* (Lyon, 1561; facs.ed., Stuttgart, 1987), iii, 27; p. 116.
- 28 See L.G. Salingar, 'King Lear, Montaigne and Harsnett', in Salingar, *Dramatic Form in Shakespeare and the Jacobean* (Cambridge, 1986), p. 114.
- 29 See Greenblatt 1988, pp. 133-4, and 138, where the Duke in *Measure for Measure*, fusing 'strategies of statecraft and religion', is said to be an emblem of Shakespeare.
- 30 See N.J. Rigaud, 'L'homosexualité féminine dans *A mad couple*...', *Bulletin de la société d'études anglo-américaines des XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles* 20 (1985): pp. 23-36. I thank Ian Maclean for drawing my attention to this essay. See also his stimulating study of Michel de Pure's *La Prétieuse*, 'La voix des précieuses et les détours de l'expression', in *Présences Féminines. Littérature et Société au XVIIe Siècle Français*, ed. I. Richmond and C. Venesoen (Paris-Seattle-Tübingen, 1987), pp. 41-71. Brome's play is available in *Six Caroline Plays*, ed. A.S. Knowland (London, 1962).
- 31 *Women and the English Renaissance. Literature and the Nature of Womanhood, 1540-1620* (Urbana, Ill., and Brighton, 1984). One critic rightly hails this book for collecting 'an extraordinary range of materials that are coherently assembled, especially in relation to the central problematic of female transvestism' (Cohen 1987, pp. 25-6). By the same token, its complete absence from Jean Howard's study of cross-dressing in the Renaissance (Howard 1988), seems like an act of disapproving feminist censorship.
- 32 Greenblatt cites Ian Maclean's outstandingly well-informed and lucid study, *The Renaissance Notion of*
- Woman* (Cambridge, 1980) for the claim that sixteenth- and seventeenth-century physicians 'agreed that male and female sexual organs were fully homologous', so that the clitoris could be aligned with the penis (pp. 79, 83). However, reference to the passage in Maclean's book cited (p. 33) shows him in fact reporting that the difficulties experienced by Falloppio's attempt to make a one-to-one comparison were so great that, 'by the end of the sixteenth century, most anatomists abandon this parallelism'. *Caveat lector Greenblatt!*
- 33 Maclean, *op.cit.*, p. 32.
- 34 So Fineman 1989 complains that 'it seems clear that it is Shakespeare's literary text that controls Greenblatt's reading of the history of medicine, and that, correlatively, it is not the case that the history of medicine opens up, on this reading, a novel way to read Shakespeare' (p. 75).
- 35 See *Shakespeare: The Critical Heritage, Vol. 2, 1693-1733* (London and Boston, 1974), pp. 458, 507-508: Theobald got his knowledge from Warburton, whose copy he borrowed. The most accessible modern presentation of the echoes from Harsnett is in Kenneth Muir's New Arden edition of *King Lear* (London, 1963 ed.), pp. 253-6; also Muir 1961, pp. 147-161.
- 36 Muir's list includes 'bo-peep', 'neather-stocks' (once elsewhere in Shakespeare), 'hysterica passio', 'vaunt-courier', 'the prince of darkness', 'star-blasting', 'pue', 'Frateretto' and the other devil's names, 'propinquity', 'auricular', 'gaster', 'asquint', and much else: Muir 1961, pp. 147-161.
- 37 *New York Review of Books*, 21 November 1991, p. 17. In a footnote Wills cites 'comic references to exorcism in *King Lear*, as in *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Twelfth Night*', observing that 'Greenblatt does not notice that "exorcism" in Shakespeare does not always refer to dispossession. It can mean

- "conjunction" (*All's Well*, 5.3.304-6, 2 Henry VI 1.4.4., *Julius Caesar* 2.1.323-4)'.
 38 One essay comments on a sermon in which Hugh Latimer records how he once comforted a pregnant woman who had been sentenced to death for killing one of her children. The woman became apprehensive that she 'would die without being "churched" — that is', Greenblatt glosses, 'without the Catholic rite of purification... after child-birth (or menstruation) to cleanse the woman of the stain associated with any blood or discharge' (Greenblatt 1988, pp. 129-30). Greenblatt describes this as a Catholic rite; to Latimer it was 'a doctrinal error': but the Church of England went its own way, including in the Book of Common Prayer a service for the churching of women which exists to this day. Subsequently (p. 132) Greenblatt mistakenly links this practice with Hermione's complaint (in *The Winter's Tale*, 3.2.103-4), that Leontes has denied her 'the child-bed privilege'. Elsewhere Greenblatt refers to the fact that 'between 1560 and 1620 torture was regularly used in the interrogation of Catholics accused of treason' (Greenblatt 1990, p. 13): alas, not only Catholics.
- 39 See Brian Vickers, "'The Power of Persuasion': Images of the Orator, Elyot to Shakespeare", in J.J. Murphy (ed.), *Renaissance Eloquence* (Berkeley, Cal., 1983), pp. 411-35.
- 40 See, e.g., Vickers 1968, pp. 426-7.
- 41 See the classic essay by R.S. Crane, 'The Houyhnhnms, the Yahoos, and the History of Ideas', in J.A. Mazzeo (ed.), *Reason and the Imagination* (London, 1962), pp. 231-53.
- 42 Notes *ad loc.* in *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, ed. David Bevington, 3rd ed. (Glenview, Ill., 1980), p. 1512, from Charles Frey, 'The Tempest and the New World', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 30 (1979): pp. 29-41, at p. 34.
- 43 Review *cit.* in note 23 above, p. 250.
- 44 In Kinney (ed.), *Rogues, Vagabonds & Sturdy Beggars. A New Gallery of Tudor and Early Stuart Rogue Literature*, 2nd ed. (Amherst, Mass., 1990), p. 1.
- 45 D.B. Quinn (ed.), *The Roanoke Voyages, 1584-1590*, 2 vols. (London, 1955). Harriot's *True Report* is in Vol. I, pp. 314-87: page-references incorporated into the text, prefixed by 'H.' I have modernised u/v and i/j spellings. The *Report* is also found in editions of Hakluyt's *Voyages*, such as the old 'Everyman' edition, 8 vols. (London, n.d.) VI, pp. 164-96.
- 46 I quote, as Greenblatt does, from Machiavelli, *The Prince and the Discourses*, intro. M. Lerner (New York, 1950), reprinting the Detmold translation, p. 146; subsequent page-references incorporated into the text.
- 47 See Livy, I.xviii-xxi: in the translation by Aubrey de Selincourt, *The Early History of Rome* (Harmondsworth, 1960), pp. 37-40. According to Livy, Numa gave Rome 'a second beginning, this time on the solid basis of law and religious observance', since war 'was no civilizing influence, and the proud spirit of his people could be tamed only if they learned to lay aside their swords'. The most effective way of dealing with such a 'rough and ignorant mob' was 'to inspire them with the fear of the gods', and to facilitate this he invented the story that 'he was in the habit of meeting the goddess Egeria by night, and that it was her authority which guided him' in establishing rites, priests, a cult, and an ethos of oath-keeping and peacefulness. The result was an exemplary period of law and order. Note that Livy, no less than Machiavelli, says nothing about this forming the origin of religion. Does Greenblatt seriously think that classical and Renaissance authors know no better than this?
- 48 *Francesco Guicciardini: The Historian's Craft* (Toronto, 1977), pp. 82-5. Phillips is quoting his 'Considerazioni sulle Discorsi di Machiavelli'.

- 49 See, e.g., Richard Westfall, 'Scientific Patronage: Galileo and the Telescope', *Isis* 76 (1985): pp. 18-22; Robert S. Westman, 'The Astronomer's Role in the Sixteenth Century: A Preliminary Study', *History of Science* 18 (1980): pp. 105-47; Mario Biagioli, 'Galileo's system of patronage', *History of Science* 28 (1990): pp. 1-62.
- 50 For a useful and well-illustrated survey, see Helen Wallis, *Raleigh & Roanoke. The First English Colony in America, 1544-1590* (Raleigh, NC., 1988), the catalogue of a joint exhibition organised by the British Library and the North Carolina Museum of History, March 8-June 6, 1985. For White's graphic work, including many drawings and a remarkably accurate map of Virginia, see pp. 49-73; for Harriot's work in geography and navigation, pp. 74-81.
- 51 John W. Shirley, *Thomas Harriot: A Biography* (Oxford, 1983): page-references incorporated into the text. Professor Shirley had earlier edited *Thomas Harriot. Renaissance Scientist* (Oxford, 1974), in which seven writers make good Harriot's claim to be among the outstanding Renaissance scientists in mathematics, astronomy, and navigation.
- 52 Greenblatt records that his parents were 'first-generation Americans born in Boston to poor Jewish immigrants from Lithuania' (Greenblatt 1990, p. 6). My ancestors were originally Scottish, who emigrated to Ireland looking for work, but arrived during the great potato famine. Moving on to Wales, they were in time to help open up the coalmines which made so much profit for the lucky few. Where does either of us really belong, 'by right'?
- 53 Levin 1979, pp. 85-102.
- 54 See, e.g., G. Bullough (ed.), *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, Vol. 4 (London, 1962), pp. 155-432, or the 'New Arden' edition by A.R. Humphreys.
- 55 *The Boke Named the Governour*, ed.
- H.H.S. Croft, 2 vols. (London, 1883), II. 406-408: An early (and somewhat bizarre) instance of the disguised ruler moving among his people is Saturninus in *Titus Andronicus*, 4.4.73-7.
- 56 Dr. Johnson recorded that 'many readers lament to see Falstaff so hardly used by his old friend. But if it be considered that the fat knight has never uttered one sentiment of generosity, and with all his power of exciting mirth has nothing in him that can be esteemed, no great pain will be suffered from the reflection that he is compelled to live honestly, and maintained by the king with a promise of advancement when he shall deserve it'. *Shakespeare: The Critical Heritage*, vol. 5: 1765-1774 (London 1979), p. 122. See also *ibid.* pp. 123-5 for Johnson's marvellous valedictory note on Falstaff, expressing warm affection while preserving clear-headed moral judgment.
- 57 This is surely a commonplace in *Henry IV* criticism; but see, e.g., Vickers 1968, pp. 113-9.
- 58 Bradley's essay, 'The Rejection of Falstaff' is collected in his *Oxford Lectures on Poetry* (London, 1909). For Morgann's *Essay on the Dramatic Character of Sir John Falstaff* (1777) and some extremely able refutations of it, see *Shakespeare: The Critical Heritage*, Vol. 6, 1774-1801 (London, 1981), pp. 21-3, 164-80, 326-7, 440-6, 469-79, 490-9. On the continuing trend to see Hal as a 'killjoy' in rejecting Falstaff, see Richard Dutton's excellent survey of modern criticism on 'The Second Tetralogy' in Wells 1990, pp. 337-80, at p. 359; and *ibid.*, pp. 361-2, for anti-militarist reactions to *Henry V* following the first world war.
- 59 In an essay written about ten years afterwards Greenblatt reaffirms his belief that 'the sites of resistance in Shakespeare's second tetralogy are *coopted* in the plays' ironic affirmation' of kingship (Greenblatt 1990, p. 165; my italics). 'Shakespeare', he

- claims, 'shows that the triumph rests upon a claustrophobic narrowing of pleasure, a hypocritical manipulation of appearances, and a systematic betrayal of friendship...'. These 'subversive perceptions', however, 'remain within the structure of the play', are thus 'contained', 'indeed serve to heighten a power they would appear to question' (*ibid.*). A decade has only strengthened his sense of the rightness of his interpretation. — The word I have italicised, 'coopted', has taken on a new meaning in some critical circles. As Gerald Graff observes, it was 'in the 1960s that the word "co-opt" in the derogatory sense of neutralize or disarm first entered the language', where it now means "to take over; secure for oneself", as in the assimilation of "an independent minority... into an established group or culture... forced to adopt its standards": Graff 1989, pp. 169-70. This will be a valuable addition to New Historicist vocabulary.
- 60 Lentricchia, for instance, has pointed out that in Greenblatt's essay on 'Marlowe, Marx, and Anti-Semitism' (reprinted in Greenblatt 1990, pp. 40-58), 'even if you've read no Marx at all you see, in the very passages that Greenblatt deploys to make his political point, that Marx is saying something else. The Jew is not a "universal phenomenon", to cite Greenblatt's curtailment of Marx' — the passage Greenblatt quotes omitting this key point — 'but a "universal anti-social element". And he is a "universal anti-social element" not for all time but for the "present time", the time of capital and Christianity which he represents. What is historically specific in Marx' and 'always clear... — the antisocial is the undesirable condition of society', is generalised and blurred by Greenblatt to make his Foucauldian case. See Lentricchia 1988, p. 99; 1989, p. 240, with further details of Greenblatt's misreading of Marx's *Eighteenth Brumaire*. Anne Barton, having shown how Greenblatt distorts *The Tempest* so as to indict it of colonialism, has commented that in the Introduction to *Learning to Curse* (Greenblatt 1990, pp. 11-15) 'a similar distortion of the evidence in order to convict an imperialist can be seen'. Quoting Edmund Scott's *Exact Discourse of... the East Indians* (1606) from the Hakluyt Society edition of 1943, Greenblatt reproduces a horrific passage describing how Scott and his men tortured and finally killed a Chinese goldsmith. Greenblatt denounces the editor for having praised Scott's endurance in the face of a long and violent attack by the Chinese, their commercial rivals in Java — 'the moral stupidity of this drivel', Greenblatt proposes, 'obviously reflects the blind patriotism of a nation besieged' (sc., I suppose, England, in 1943) — and says that he 'makes no direct comment on this passage' (Greenblatt 1990, p. 12). Yet, as Barton shows, the Hakluyt Society editor 'does in fact deplore "these barbarous proceedings" in a note appended to the passage itself. More important, however, is the fact that by severing the episode from its context, and also using an old, inaccurate edition instead of the widely available facsimile (1973), Greenblatt has turned Scott into a "sadist" without trying to investigate what might impel a man who was not a psychopath to countenance... an act of such appalling cruelty. What Scott and the other employees of the East India Company in Java did to their Chinese prisoner was inexcusable. It is not, however, once returned to its place in Scott's narrative, inexplicable' (Barton 1991, p. 52). As she shows, this act is the climax to a horrific siege, and an explicit retaliation by the English party on the Chinese for having burned most of their men alive — a passage omitted by the Hakluyt editor, and so by Greenblatt. The revenge thus had a 'horrible symmetry', and (another detail

omitted by Greenblatt, ever willing to indict Europeans) it was 'overseen and in part directed by officers of the Javan king' (*ibid.*). For her account of 'dubious tactics' in other historical essays by Greenblatt see *ibid.*, pp. 51-4. Finally, for the distortions (due to an *a priori* Foucauldian conception of the self rather than, as here, manipulation of a historical document) in Greenblatt's essay 'Psychoanalysis and Renaissance Culture' (reprinted in Greenblatt 1990, pp. 131-145), see Levin 1990b, pp. 436-7, 442-4, 468-9. Readers of these essays must be on their guard.

- 61 *Ressentiment*, tr. W.W. Woldheim (from 'Das Ressentiment im Aufbau der Moral', in *Gesammelte Abhandlungen und Aufsätze*, Leipzig, 1915), ed. L.A. Coser (New York, 1961); page-references incorporated in the text.

Chapter Five Psychocriticism

- 1 *Against the Self-Images of the Age* (London, 1971), pp. 7-8.
 2 Walton 1990, p. 156.
 3 See, e.g., MacIntyre 1971, p. 35; Crews 1986, pp. 21, 79-80; Gellner 1985, pp. 10, 130-1, 157-67, 197-9; Hans Eysenck, *Decline and Fall of the Freudian Empire* (New York, 1985); and Sulloway 1991, p. 261.
 4 See Vickers 1989, p. 236. To sum up: in 1824 Hamlet and Ophelia were diagnosed as suffering from mania, melancholia and craziness; in 1829, Lear and Edgar: mania and demonia; 1880, Othello: epilepsy; 1917, Hamlet: hysteria; 1920, Lady Macbeth: hysteria; 1921, Shylock: anal eroticism; 1934, Timon: syphilis; 1942, Hamlet: the Ganser state; 1944, Lear: narcissism; 1960, Viola: hermaphroditism; Cordelia: incest; etc.
 5 For Jones's essay see the *American Journal of Psychology* 2 (1910): pp. 72ff; for the book, see *Hamlet and*

Oedipus (London, 1949). Avi Erlich, in *Hamlet's Absent Father* (Princeton, N.J., 1978), challenged both Freud and Jones.

- 6 'Morose Ben Jonson', in *The Triple Thinkers* (New York, 1938).
 7 For bibliographies of psychoanalytical Shakespeare criticism see Norman N. Holland, *Psychoanalysis and Shakespeare* (New York, 1964); David Willbern, 'William Shakespeare: A Bibliography of Psychoanalytic and Psychological Criticism, 1964-1975', *International Review of Psychoanalysis* 5 (1978): pp. 361-72, reprinted and updated to 1978 in Murray Schwarz and Coppélia Kahn (edd.), *Representing Shakespeare: New Psychoanalytic Essays* (Baltimore, Md., 1980), pp. 264-86.
 8 Ruth Nevo, *Shakespeare's Other Language* (London: Methuen, 1987); Kay Stockholder, *Dream Works. Lovers and Families in Shakespeare's Plays* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1987); Marjorie Garber, *Shakespeare's Ghost Writers. Literature as Uncanny Causality* (London: Methuen, 1987); Stanley Cavell, *Disowning Knowledge in Six Plays of Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).
 9 'Freud and the Idea of a Pseudo-Science', in R. Borger and F. Cioffi (eds.), *Explanation in the Behavioural Sciences* (Cambridge, 1970), pp. 471-99.
 10 See Cioffi's review of Sulloway's book, 'Freud - New Myths to Replace the Old', *New Society* 50 (1979): pp. 503-504; and F.C. Crews, 'Beyond Sulloway's Freud: Psychoanalysis Minus the Myth of the Hero', in P.J. Clark and C. Wright (eds.), *Philosophy, Science and Psychoanalysis* (Oxford, 1986), repr. in, and quoted from, Crews 1986, pp. 88-111.
 11 *Isis* 82 (1991): pp. 245-75. I am grateful to Professor Sulloway for sending me the typescript of his essay before publication.
 12 Ellenberger 1970, pp. 480-4, and 'The Story of "Anna O.": A Critical

Review with New Data', *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 8 (1972): pp. 267-79. As more material about Freud comes to light, his behaviour seems less and less like that of a man of science. The recently published *Clinical Diary of Sandor Ferenczi*, one of Freud's closest disciples, records his horror at Freud's disclosure in 1926 that 'he was uninterested in curing patients whom he regarded as "riffraff" (*Gesinde*)'. Freud's 'candid admission that he considered neurotics to be a rabble only good for supporting analysts financially was a blow from which Ferenczi never recovered'. Disillusioned, he came to see Freud's vanity, hypocrisy, insecurity, concluding in 1923 that 'if he had not been so bedazzled by Freud he would have realized that Freud's brilliant ideas were usually based only on a single case'. See Phyllis Grosskurth's review essay in the *New York Review of Books* for 8 December 1988, pp. 45-7.

- 13 Wilden, *System and Structure. Essays in Communication and Exchange* (London, 1972), pp. 289-301; Porter, *A Social History of Madness. Stories of the Insane* (London, 1987), pp. 146-66; 'Daniel Schreber: Madness, Sex and the Family', acknowledging his debt to the recent literature on Schreber's case (pp. 246-8), especially Morton Schatzman, *Soul Murder: Persecution in the Family* (London, 1973). Elsewhere Porter gives brief but penetrating evaluations of some other Freudian case-histories, notably 'Dora' (pp. 113-18), 'Little Hans' (p. 163), Freud's own psychoneurosis (pp. 214-22), and the 'Wolf Man' (pp. 223-8). His account of how Freud relentlessly seized on explanations in terms of the patient's infantile sexual neuroses, ignoring the family context (Little Hans's parents threatened to cut his penis off if he misbehaved; Dora was the pawn in an adultery exchange, her disgust being categorised as an

'unhealthy' reaction which actually showed her unconscious desire for the man; and so on) — all this more than justifies Porter's description of Freud as 'an extremely bad listener. He was totally selective, and his appropriation of his patients' stories for his own theoretical purposes was arguably more aggressive and insensitive than the stone-deafness of his predecessors' (p. 35).

- 14 See, e.g., C. Bernheimer and C. Kahane (eds.), *In Dora's Case* (New York, 1985, 1990; M. Sprengnether, *The Spectral Mother: Freud, Feminism, and Psychoanalysis* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1991); H.S. Decker, *Freud, Dora, and Vienna 1900* (New York, 1991).
 15 As Crews records, he had previously been a Freudian, taken in by the 'self-validating doctrines' of 'a seductive dogma that had promised quick, deep knowledge', but which he came to see as 'a faith like any other', a 'doctrine that compels irrational loyalty' (pp. xi-xii). This collection of essays, dating from 1975 to 1985, Crews declares, is intended 'to spare students and others the intellectual befuddlement that I myself endured in my Freudian period. As a member of a society steeped in Freudian platitudes, I would like people to know that the guilt dispensed by psychoanalytic theorists to striving women and to the parents of homosexuals, "neurotics", and psychotics can be plausibly declined' (p. 41). To that guilt-stricken list we can now add, according to some psychoanalysts, cancer patients, who are responsible for their own ailment.
 16 *The Freudian Slip. Psychoanalysis and Textual Criticism*, tr. K. Soper (Atlantic Highlands, N.J., 1976): see Grünbaum 1984, pp. 194-206.
 17 'The Theory of Your Dreams', in R.S. Cohen and L. Landau (eds.), *Physics, Philosophy, and Psychoanalysis* (Dordrecht and Boston, 1983), pp. 51-71, at p. 69.
 18 After a searching evaluation of the case against Freud made by Habermas, Ricoeur, Popper and

- others; Grünbaum examines in turn 'The Clinical Method of Psychoanalytic Investigation' (pp. 95-171) and 'The Cornerstone of the Psychoanalytic Edifice: Is the Freudian Theory of Repression Well Founded?' (pp. 173-266), with a synthesising 'Epilogue' (pp. 269-85). Crews judges that after Grünbaum's book 'psychoanalysis... stands irremediably exposed as a speculative cult', and 'the wholesale debunking of Freudian claims, both therapeutic and theoretic, will be not just thinkable but inescapable' (Crews 1986, p. 81).
- 19 On psychoanalysis as a self-perpetuating guild see Gellner 1985, pp. 9, 75-9, 94, 127-8; also Paul Roazen, *Freud and His Followers* (New York, 1975), and Janet Malcolm, *Psychoanalysis: The Impossible Profession* (New York, 1981).
- 20 On psychoanalysis as a belief-system offering salvation, with priests having pastoral duties, see Gellner 1985, pp. 25-6, 35, 37-43, 62, 109, 131-2, and Crews 1986, pp. 60, 75, 107. On its tendency to split into sects, with rival dogmas, see Crews 1986, p. 78 ('having been founded more on ecclesiastic than on scientific principles, Freud's movement has inevitably splintered into dogmatic sects...'), and Georg Weisz, 'Scientists and Sectarians: The Case of Psychoanalysis', *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 11 (1975): pp. 350-64.
- 21 'Victims of Psychiatry', *New York Review of Books*, 23 January 1975, p. 17.
- 22 *Gulliver's Travels*, Preface; in *Works*, ed. H. Davis, vol. 11 (Oxford, 1959), pp. 6-7.
- 23 Karen Horney was a German-American doctor who, in the 1930s, expressed doubts about the male assumption behind psychoanalytical dogma: 'She challenged the formidable phalanx of male analysts to provide convincing evidence to support central doctrines... as penis envy and the castration complex.

Worse, she pointed out that even if penis envy were to be found to be inordinately prevalent among women it might simply be because the reality was that in the harsh, external world women were at a disadvantage, a social, cultural, economic and political disadvantage, when compared with men.' This introduction of socio-economic reality into the 'pure psychology' that Freud so often proclaimed (blind, perhaps, to the biogenetic basis of his theories: Sulloway 1983, pp. 425-6, 437-44, 487-8, 495) was not well received. Horney's call for psychoanalysis to be grounded on evidence, take greater account of reality, and 'accept the possibility that neurosis could occur without there being an unresolved Oedipal complex', these positive appeals were regarded as a threat to the discipline's very existence. She was denounced, accused of 'indulging in pathological narcissism', releasing her 'repressed anger' at male authority figures, and punished by being 'stripped of her status as a training analyst' at the New York Psychoanalytic Institute. This depressing story shows the dogmatic tendency in Freudianism, its intolerance of rival explanatory models. See Anthony Clare's review of Susan Quinn's book, *A Mind of Her Own: The Life of Karen Horney* (London, 1988), in *Times Literary Supplement*, 29 April 1988, p. 465.

- 24 A defence of Freud against charges of misogyny was provided by Juliet Mitchell, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* (New York, 1974), but many feminists rejected her apology. Among the influential works taking an opposed view are Dorothy Dinnerstein, *The Mermaid and the Minotaur* (New York, 1976); Nancy Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering* (Berkeley, Cal., 1982); Daniel Stern, *The First Relationship — Infant and Mother* (Cambridge, Mass., 1977), and *The Interpersonal World of the Infant* (New York, 1985). I am indebted here to Grosskurth 1991.

- 25 Nevo quotes from *Metaphor: A Psychoanalytic View* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1978).
- 26 I think in particular of *The Diall of Virtue. A Study of Poems on Affairs of State in the Seventeenth Century* (Princeton, N.J., 1963).
- 27 On the vogue for Greek romance in the Renaissance, and its use by Shakespeare, see, e.g., S.L. Wolff, *The Greek Romances in Elizabethan Prose Fiction* (New York, 1912; 1961); E.C. Pettet, *Shakespeare and the Romance Tradition* (London, 1949; 1970); Carol Gesner, *Shakespeare and the Greek Romance: A Study of Origins* (Lexington, Ky., 1970). Thomas Hägg, *The Novel in Antiquity* (Oxford, 1983) is the best modern introduction to the romance as a narrative genre (subject to some reservations expressed in my review for *Times Literary Supplement*, 20 April 1984, p. 427).
- 28 Critics continually apply this mode of enquiry to Shakespeare without any misgivings, although sometimes with bizarre results. In *As You Like It* Orlando, having triumphed in the wrestling, is so overwhelmed by Rosalind's beauty that he declares:
My better parts
Are all thrown down, and that
which here stands up
Is but a quintain, a mere lifeless
block. (1.2.238ff.)
A quintain was a post, sometimes holding out a shield on a hinged arm, at which riders practising tilting directed their lances. According to Barbara Parker, however, the reference is to be understood as 'symbolically alluding to the "first death" in sin bequeathed to man in Eden. The block that "stands up" is a phallic pun affirming the sensual basis of [Orlando's] infatuation': *A Precious Seeing. Love and Reason in Shakespeare's Plays* (New York, 1987), p. 105. Unfortunately the critic has insinuated an allusion into the text without reading the rest of the line, where a 'mere lifeless block' would be a singularly inappropriate

description of a penis. (Not to mention original sin!)

- 29 Barzun 1974, p. 78; Crews 1986, p. 98.
- 30 Green, cit. Nevo 1987, p. 36.
- 31 Green, cit. *ibid.*, p. 56.
- 32 Credit for creating other characters in drama is freely given: thus Hamlet is said to have generated the Ghost (p. 46), and also created Ophelia (p. 49): an instance of bisexual creativity, perhaps.
- 33 Compare Nevo's comment on the dénouement in *Cymbeline*, when Posthumus' anguished lament on realising how much he has wronged Imogen is interrupted by a page-boy (Imogen in disguise, as we know and he doesn't) whom he strikes. This blow, to Nevo, is a 'therapeutic... acting out of aggression... an uninhibited action... passionate, and this is a capacity that his masculinity needs as much as her femininity desires' (p. 90). The blow clears the air, 'defusing unconscious resentments which could fester and obstruct, functioning to liberate him from his fear of sexual inadequacy, her from her fear of sexual surrender' (p. 91). That explanation might seem to constitute an apology for wife-beating and a suggestion of sado-masochism, confusing sexuality and violence, but it is surprisingly blind to the dramatic context, in which Posthumus can have no idea that the page-boy is Imogen. It is depressing to note that Jung's concepts of Animus and Anima similarly posited a distinction between masculine and feminine in which men are characterised by *logos*, highly developed, and *eros*, less highly, while women are the reverse. But when *eros* possesses Animus, as Jung put it, "in vielen Fällen hat der Mann das Gefühl (und hat nicht ganz unrecht damit), dass einzig Verführung oder Verprügelung oder Vergewaltigung noch die nötige Ueberzeugungskraft hätten": cit. Ursula Baumgardt, *König Drosselbart und C.G. Jungs Frauenbild. Kritische*

Gedanken zu Anima und Animus (Olten, 1987), pp. 60-1. I feel sympathy for generations of women who have had to put up with the chauvinism of the founding fathers of psychoanalysis.

- 34 As a Renaissance scholar, Garber ought to have recorded that serious objections have been made to Freud's account of Leonardo, notably by Meyer Schapiro, 'Leonardo and Freud: An Art-Historical Study', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 7 (1956): pp. 147-78, reprinted in, and quoted from, P.O. Kristeller and P.P. Wiener (eds.), *Renaissance Essays* (New York, 1968). Freud analysed a dream of Leonardo's in which, as a baby lying in his cradle, a bird ('nibbio' in the Italian) inserted its tail in his mouth and struck him inside the lips. According to the German translation Freud was using, the bird was a vulture, and he interpreted its tail as a phallic symbol replacing the mother's breast, the whole forming a fantasy typical of passive homosexuals. The Egyptian hieroglyphic writing for 'mother', moreover, is a vulture; the vulture-headed goddess Mut is sometimes represented with a phallus; and for Freud the resemblance of 'Mut' and 'Mutter' could hardly be accidental (pp. 304-7) — to German speakers, at least. Unfortunately, Schapiro shows that 'nibbio' actually means 'kite', not vulture; that Leonardo's interest in the kite bird derived from his scientific observations of natural mechanisms for flight; and that the motif of a child being kissed by bees, say, or having honey placed on its mouth, was an ancient aetiology for inspiration or excellence in some future career (pp. 308-15). As for Freud's speculations about Leonardo's childhood, Schapiro shows how several other alternative explanations 'were ignored by Freud because of his certitude about the vulture and its legend' (p. 314). Freud's theories about the significance of Saint Anne as a surrogate mother were disproved

by Schapiro, drawing on church history and art-history (pp. 315-36). Schapiro's judgment that Freud 'ignored the social and the historical where they are most pertinent' (p. 316) may stand as a valid comment on psychocriticism today, which also shares the 'weaknesses... found in other works by psychoanalysts in the cultural fields: the habit of building explanations of complex phenomena on a single datum and the too little attention given to history and the social situation' (p. 335). See also A.C. Elms, 'Freud as Leonardo: Why the First Psychobiography Went Wrong', *Journal of Personality* 56 (1988): pp. 19-40.

- 35 Johnson, *Observations on Macbeth* (1745), in *Shakespeare: The Critical Heritage*, Vol. 3, 1733-1752 (London and Boston, 1975), p. 179; Scot, *Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584), Book III, chs. 2, 9, ed. M. Summers (London, 1930; New York, 1972), pp. 25, 31; Burke, 'Witchcraft and Magic in Renaissance Italy', in Sydney Anglo (ed.), *The Damned Art. Essays in the Literature of Witchcraft* (London, 1970), pp. 32-52, at 37, 40, 49; *Hamlet*, 3.2.351.
- 36 First published in *Yale French Studies* 55-56 (1977): pp. 11-52; reprinted in *Literature and Psychoanalysis*, ed. Shoshana Felman (Baltimore, Md., 1982). Stockholder 1987, p. 245, quotes an interpreter of Lacan who sees Hamlet as 'liberated in death from "narcissistic attachment to the phallus", which subjects him to the other's desires': 'liberated' is nice.
- 37 I have not thought it worth while recapitulating large amounts of Lacanian theory to gloss Garber's text. For relatively comprehensible accounts see Wilden 1972, pp. 20-26; 260-94, 483-4; Bowie 1979, and Bowie, *Freud, Proust and Lacan. Theory As Fiction* (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 99-163; also Dews 1987, Frank 1989.
- 38 See, e.g., Stephen Heath, *The Sexual Fix* (London, 1982), commenting

- on the cult of the penis-phallus in contemporary French sexualogical psychoanalysis (p. 81). One Lacanian describes "the concept phallus [as] that from which is supported the desire of both the man and the woman", both sexes focussing on it because of "its possible erection, that is to say, to a visible manifestation of desire" (p. 108). Heath sceptically comments that Lacanian psychoanalysts insist 'that the phallus is not the same as the penis (which nevertheless, as in the passage just cited, seems always to be popping up and giving the lie to such oily double talk...)' (*ibid.*). According to Wilden 1972 (pp. 20, 23, 268-9, 284, 286, 292), Lacan always insisted that he was referring to a symbolic, not a real object, but in some of the passages Wilden quotes it is hard to tell the difference, as when he defines the phallus as "a signifier, the signifier of desire... The phallus represents the intrusion of vital thrusting or growth as such..." (p. 284). Wilden ultimately finds Lacan guilty of Freudian chauvinism (pp. 282, 290), indulging a 'metaphysics of the phallus' and making it a 'privileged object' (pp. 288, 287), so encouraging 'a new justification of patrocriticism and phallogocriticism in France' (p. 281).
- 39 For an up-to-date idea of the actual philosophical preoccupations of Shakespeare's culture, which will confirm the vast distance between the public theatres and the philosophy schools, see *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, ed. Charles B. Schmitt and Quentin Skinner (Cambridge, 1988).
- 40 See R.H. Popkin, *The History of Scepticism from Erasmus to Spinoza* (rev. ed., Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1979); C.B. Schmitt, *Cicero Scepticus: A Study of the Influence of the 'Academica' in the Renaissance* (The Hague, 1972).
- 41 Scepticism is identified at various times with an impulse to 'annihilation', to a 'self-consuming disappoint-

ment that seeks world-consuming revenge' (p. 6), a 'fear of anxiety of inexpressiveness' (p. 9), a 'disgust with language' (p. 12), a 'refusal of the world in disgust' (p. 15). It is 'a male business', oddly enough, 'not a female business' (p. 16). It is an intimation of 'world catastrophe' first glimpsed in *Antony and Cleopatra*, and involving the rise of the new science, the 'attenuation or displacement of God', the 'attenuation' of Divine Right, and 'the shift from politically arranged to romantically desired marriage' (pp. 20-21); all these things. Scepticism offers the threat of being 'unknowable from outside' (p. 29), the power to 'ex-communicate oneself from the community in whose agreement... words exist' (*ibid.*). Wittgenstein's notion of a private language is invoked to define scepticism as 'a form of narcissism... a kind of denial of an existence shared with others' (p. 143), which is subsequently identified with 'cannibalism' (p. 152). Scepticism can also be connected with fanaticism (p. 206), and nihilism (p. 208). This seems to me a purely private series of associations, lacking either coherence or a basis in the canon of sceptical texts.

42 See Margaret Loftus Randal, *Shakespeare & His Social Context* (New York, 1987), pp. 5, 37.

43 Some critics are becoming extremely concerned with what might have happened on Othello's wedding night. A recent French study of feasts and festivity in Shakespeare alludes in passing to a theory that Othello's wedding night was interrupted three times, thus inducing in him sexual impotence, for which he compensates with the emotional equivalent of orgasm, the spasm of hysteria which makes him collapse 'en syncope'. See François Laroque, *Shakespeare et la Fête* (Paris, 1988), p. 254, citing J.-M. Maguin, *La nuit dans le théâtre de Shakespeare et de ses prédécesseurs* (Lille, 1988), Vol. I, p. 531, and P. Janton, 'Othello's

- "weak function", *Cahiers élisabéthains* 7 (1975): pp. 47-50. See also M. Pryse, 'Lust for Audience: An Interpretation of *Othello*', *ELH* 46 (1976): pp. 461-78; T.G.A. Nelson and Charles Haines, 'Othello's unconsummated marriage', *Essays in Criticism* 33 (1983): pp. 1-18. So Iago's grudge, his wish to destroy Othello and Desdemona, his ruthless plotting, working on Othello until he begins to doubt his own sanity — all this was pure irrelevance on Shakespeare's part. Sufficient sexual motivation already existed to bring about Othello's crisis, and it only needs the right technical knowledge to identify the illness from which he suffers.
- 44 Shakespeare: *The Critical Heritage, Volume 2: 1693-1733*, ed. Brian Vickers (London, 1974), p. 28. Cavell's suggestion that Desdemona must mean by her wedding-sheets those stained with hymenal blood was anticipated by Lynda E. Boose, 'Othello's Handkerchief: "The Recognizance and Pledge of Love"', *English Literary Renaissance* 5 (1975): pp. 360-74, while his idea that Othello's murdering Desdemona was an attempt to undo his act of defloration was paralleled by Edward Snow, 'Sexual Anxiety and the Male Order of Things in *Othello*', *ibid.*, 9 (1980): 384-412. I am not accusing Cavell of plagiarism: the same Freudian approach inevitably results in massive repetition of the available interpretations.
- 45 Rymer, *op. cit.* in note 44, p. 54.
- 46 A feminist makes a more perceptive comment on Iago: 'With his power evaporated, philosophy repudiated, and guilt revealed, he has no reason to talk and nothing to say...': Neely 1980, p. 232.
- 47 Neely is again a better guide to Desdemona: 'Her healthy, casual acceptance of sexuality is evident in her banter with Iago (II.i. 109-64) and with the clown (III.iv. 1-18), in her affirmation that she "did love the Moor, to live with him" (I.iii.248), and in her refusal to postpone consummation of "the rites for which I love him" (I.iii.257)': *ibid.*, p. 220.
- 48 Rymer, *op. cit.* in note 44, p. 37.
- 49 R.W. Dixon, writing to Gerard Manley Hopkins on 11 October 1881, commented on *The Ring and the Book* as marking 'a failure in Browning's power, which manifests itself in these ways. 1. Loss of form, with every kind of monstrosity. 2. The impotent remarking of particulars: as when he observes that the names of Wiseman, Newman, and Manning all contain the word man. 3. Preaching instead of teaching.' See C.C. Abbott (ed.), *The Correspondence of Gerard Manley Hopkins and Richard Watson Dixon* (London, rev. ed. 1955), p. 70.
- 50 In his chapter on *Coriolanus* (Cavell 1987, pp. 143-78) Cavell draws on earlier work (Adelman, 1978), to give a reading of the play largely in terms of *Coriolanus*' relationship with his mother (I discuss one aspect of his reading in chapter 7 below). For a corrective to this approach see my essay '*Coriolanus* and the demons of politics', in Vickers 1989, pp. 135-93.
- 51 A useful starting point would be Himmelfarb 1987, especially ch. 2, 'Clio and the New History', pp. 33-46, and ch. 6, 'Case Studies in Psychohistory', pp. 107-20 (reviewing Isaac Kramnick, *The Rage of Edmund Burke* and Bruce Mazlish, *James and John Stuart Mill*). See also Barzun 1974; and David E. Stannard, *Shrinking History: On Freud and the Failure of Psychohistory* (New York and Oxford, 1980).
- 52 *Patterns of Intention. On the Historical Explanation of Pictures* (London, 1985), pp. 12-13. See also Grünbaum 1984, pp. 2-3. The categories were originally proposed by Wilhelm Windelband.
- 53 *Shakespearean Criticism*, ed. T.M. Raysor, 2 vols. (London, 1960), I, p. 198.

Chapter Six: Feminist Stereotypes

- 1 *Morality and Conflict* (Oxford, 1983), p. 7.
- 2 Elizabeth H. Hageman, Preface to 'Women in the Renaissance II', *English Literary Renaissance* 18 (1988): p. 3.
- 3 Bibliographies can be found in Lenz *et al.* 1980, pp. 314-36 and in the two special issues of *English Literary Renaissance*: 14 (1984): pp. 409-25 and 18 (1988): pp. 138-67. See now Philip C. Kolin, *Shakespeare and Feminist Criticism. An Annotated Bibliography and Commentary* (New York, 1991), which gives detailed summaries but avoids any form of evaluation.
- 4 See, e.g., the critical review by Anne Barton, *TLS* 24 Oct. 1975, p. 1295, and comments by Greene in Greene 1981, p. 42 n. 9. One recent writer finds it 'still inspiring' (Dollimore 1990, p. 416). See also Barton's review of books by Marilyn French and Coppélia Kahn, 'Was Shakespeare a Chauvinist?', *New York Review of Books*, 11 June 1981, pp. 20-22.
- 5 Novy's argument that 'we must demythologize [the] stereotypes' of Shakespeare as 'the uncritical adherent of the most conservative views of his time', together with its polar opposite of him 'as the universal genius who totally transcends all historical and psychological limitations' (p. 17) is well taken.
- 6 *The Crisis of the Aristocracy 1558-1641* (London, 1967; the abridged edition), p. 271.
- 7 The most penetrating review of Stone's book on the family was by Alan Macfarlane, in *History and Theory* 18 (1979): pp. 103-26. Other reviews made briefer, but collectively devastating criticisms: see E.P. Thompson, 'Happy Families', *New Society* 8 Sept. 1977, pp. 499-501; Keith Thomas, 'The Changing Family', *TLS* 21 Oct. 1977, pp. 1226-7; David Berkowitz, *Renaissance Quarterly* 32 (1979): pp. 396-403; Randolph Trumbach, *Journal of Social History* 13 (1979): pp. 131-42; Richard Vann, *Journal of Family History* 4 (1979): pp. 308-14.
- 8 The best single corrective to Stone is the admirably balanced synthesis by Keith Wrightson, *English Society. 1580-1680* (London, 1982). Important qualifications of Stone's thesis can be found in R.B. Outhwaite (ed.), *Marriage and Society. Studies in the Social History of Marriage* (London, 1981), especially the contributions by Outhwaite, Kathleen Davies, and Vivien Brodsky Elliott. A major source wilfully neglected by Stone (since it would have disproved his argument) is Alan Macfarlane, *The Family Life of Ralph Josselin, a Seventeenth-Century Clergyman. An Essay in Historical Anthropology* (Cambridge, 1970). See also Martin Ingram, *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage in England, 1570-1640* (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 30, 137-8, 141-4, 149, 160, 179 for explicit criticisms of Stone's thesis, and Ralph Houlbrooke, *The English Family, 1450-1700* (London, 1984), chapter eight.
- 9 See my essay, 'Lawrence Stone and the Myth of the Patriarch', forthcoming.
- 10 C.L. Powell, *English Domestic Relations 1487-1653. A Study of Matrimony and Family Life in Theory and Practice As Revealed By the Literature, Law, and History of the Period* (New York, 1917; repr. 1972); Kathleen M. Davies, 'The Sacred Condition of Equality — How Original Were Puritan Doctrines of Marriage?', *Social History* 5 (1977): pp. 563-80, reprinted in a slightly revised form (including a critique of Stone) as 'Continuity and Change in Literary Advice on Marriage', in Outhwaite 1981, pp. 58-80. Although she followed Powell in attributing these more enlightened attitudes to the Puritans, Juliet

- Dusinberre gave ample evidence of attitudes to marriage in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England which were nonpatriarchal, emphasising equality and partnership: see Dusinberre 1975, pp. 24, 41-4, 74-5, 82-4, 87, 90, 97-8, 100-102, 109-10, 127, 135. For other feminists aware of more positive Renaissance attitudes to the family see, e.g., Novy 1984, pp. 4-5, 61; Jardine 1983, pp. 42-3; Dreher 1986, pp. 29-35; Bean 1980, pp. 67ff.
- 11 Margaret J.M. Ezell, *The Patriarch's Wife. Literary Evidence and the History of the Family* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1987).
- 12 P. Gartenberg and N.T. Whittemore, 'A Checklist of English Women in Print, 1475-1640', *Bulletin of Bibliography and Magazine Notes* 34 (1977): pp. 1-13; could only list 62 women authors, while Patricia Crawford, 'Women's Published Writings 1600-1700', in Mary Prior (ed.), *Women in English Society 1500-1800* (London, 1985), pp. 211-82, identified nearly 300.
- 13 I was obviously too sanguine about feminists agreeing that Shakespeare presented rape as abhorrent. Catharine R. Stimpson, at least, argues that Lavinia in *Titus Andronicus*, like Lucrece in his narrative poem, represents a disapproving male attitude to "the raped woman who must be punished" (cit. R.S. White in Wells 1990, p. 188).
- 14 See, e.g., Vickers 1968, pp. 256-8.
- 15 Brian Vickers (ed.), *Shakespeare: The Critical Heritage*, vol. 5, p. 108.
- 16 As Howard delicately puts it, 'Sodomy haunts the fringes of Stubbes's text' (Howard 1988, p. 424). His *Anatomy of Abuses* (1583) is a hysterical fantasy on moralist traditions from the Church Fathers to the Reformation, in no way representative. For the Puritan diatribe see J.W. Binns, 'Women or Transvestites on the Elizabethan Stage?: An Oxford Controversy', in *Sixteenth Century Journal* 2 (1974): pp. 95-120. As for feminist critics (such as Jardine 1983, pp. 9-36) who argue that it was homoerotic passion that the boy actors aroused in their male audience, I am glad to agree with Jean Howard and Kathleen McLuskie that 'boy actors playing women must simply have been accepted in performance as a convention. Otherwise, audience involvement with dramatic narratives premised on heterosexual love and masculine / feminine difference would have been minimal': Howard 1988, pp. 419 note, 435.
- 17 For further comments on the risk of feminist Shakespeare criticism 'introducing reductive, allegorizing, binary oppositions', see Cohen 1987, p. 25. Another example of a simple dichotomising is Jacqueline Rose's essay on sexuality in *Hamlet* (Rose 1985), which takes T.S. Eliot to task for making Gertrude guilty of 'too much sexuality', supposedly writing a critique 'of *Hamlet* for its aesthetic failure' and of Gertrude for being its cause' (pp. 95-103). But of course Eliot described the play as 'dealing with the effect of a mother's guilt upon her son' ('*Hamlet*', *Selected Essays* (London, 1951), pp. 143, 144), which, however, lacked 'an "objective correlative"'. His point was that 'Hamlet (the man) is dominated by an emotion which is . . . in excess of the facts as they appear', namely that 'his disgust is occasioned by his mother, but that his mother is not an adequate equivalent for it . . .' (p. 145). Eliot never accuses Gertrude of excessive sexuality, and Rose merely puts these words in his mouth. Nor does she observe that Hamlet's disgust is also directed against Claudius, 'the bloat king' with his 'reechy kisses, . . . paddling in your neck with his damn'd fingers'. Instead of a balanced assessment Rose reduces the whole play to a misogynistic fable, in which over and over, 'the woman is the cause', 'it is the woman who provokes a crisis', 'the woman becomes both scapegoat

- and cause of the dearth or breakdown of (Oedipal) resolution. . . . I am disappointed that some feminist critics need to scapegoat women in the plays then as a way of scapegoating men now.
- 18 This is an old-fashioned character study, isolating one personage from the play and following their appearance scene by scene. Surely modern Shakespeare criticism is capable of more complex analyses?
- 19 Citing Edith Williams, 'In Defense of Lady Macbeth', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 24 (1973): pp. 221-3.
- 20 Theodore Roszak, cit. Park 1980, p. 115.
- 21 The occasion which gave rise to this saying was a performance of the play at a provincial theatre in 1775 when the actor Cubit, due to play Hamlet, 'being seized with a sudden and serious illness in the dressing-room just before the play was going to begin', the manager asked the company 'to go through the play omitting the character of Hamlet; which being complied with it was afterwards considered by the bulk of the audience to be a great improvement!' (Frederick Harker, *TLS* 3 June 1939, p. 327, citing W.T. Parke's *Musical Memoirs* (1830).) A feminist-instigated performance of *Othello* without Iago 'were a tedious difficulty', but could no doubt be arranged.
- 22 *Reappraisals in History* (London, 1961), pp. 194-5.
- 23 Linda Bamber has questioned the appropriateness of this metaphor, 'whether or not Emilia is the fulcrum of the play, the point of view from which everything assumes its proper shape', commenting rather that 'Emilia is to *Othello* only what Macduff is to *Macbeth*: a glimpse of sanity from the horrid fascination of our madness. Neely's reading implies that we are to center the play on sanity, on Emilia; on the feminine. If we do, *Othello* is exasperating, his story tedious, and his death good riddance to bad rubbish'. But *Othello* 'does not balance on the emotional clarity of its women, as the romantic comedies do. It is about confusion, not clarity; the interest is in the ignorant, erring, angry male, not in the knowing, right-feeling woman' (Bamber 1982, p. 13). For her pains Bamber has been accused by other feminists of having 'the dubious distinction of representing the acceptable face of feminist criticism for a number of male Shakespeareans': Thompson 1988, p. 84.
- 24 For an analysis of the epistemological manipulation by which Iago makes Othello see the opposite of the truth, see Vickers 1989, chapter 3, 'Shakespeare's Hypocrites', especially pp. 114-23.
- 25 Against Freud: Gohlke 1980, pp. 162f, 165f, 168f; Boose 1987, pp. 714-16, 720, 736. See also chapter 5, note 24.
- 26 Aristotle, *On the Generation of Animals*, 767b 9ff, 775a 15.
- 27 Levin 1988: a most searching article, which deals with several issues that I have not touched on.

Chapter Seven: Christians and Marxists

- 1 'Lay Sermons, I', from *The Statesman's Manual* (1816); in *Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. H.J. Jackson (London, 1985), p. 661. Coleridge's contrast is between allegory and the symbol, which is 'characterized by a translucence of the special in the individual or of the general in the especial or of the universal in the general. . . . It always partakes of the reality which it renders intelligible; and while it enunciates the whole, abides itself as a living part in that unity of which it is representative.' Allegories, meanwhile, 'are but empty echoes which the fancy arbitrarily associates with apparitions of matter. . . .' (*ibid.*). See also Coleridge's *Aids to Reflection* (*ibid.*, pp. 671-3).
- 2 *Shakespeare's Biblical Knowledge and*

- Use of the Book of Common Prayer (London, 1935).
- 3 See, e.g., Beryl Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1952); H. Lubac, S.J., *Exégèse médiévale (Les quatre sens de l'Écriture)*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1959-1964).
 - 4 *The Poetry of Edmund Spenser* (New York, 1963), pp. 127-46.
 - 5 See, e.g., Jacques Chomarat, *Grammaire et Rhétorique chez Erasme*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1981), Vol. I pp. 568-79, especially p. 570 n.: 'Erasme a voulu effectuer une rupture [avec le Moyen Age] et effectivement il inaugure (après Valla) l'exégèse moderne...'
 - 6 In his New Cambridge edition of *Othello* (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 191-2, Norman Sanders summarises seven arguments for reading 'Judean', and rejects them all. The 'Old' Cambridge edition by Alice Walker (1957) and the New Arden edition by M.R. Ridley (1958) concur.
 - 7 *Othello. An Annotated Bibliography*, compiled by Margaret Lael Mikesell and Virginia Mason Vaughan (New York and London, 1990). References will be included in the text, giving the item-number (#123).
 - 8 *Hyppolyta's View: Some Christian Aspects of Shakespeare's Plays* (Lexington, Ky., 1961), pp. 140-41. In Bryant's reading of *The Winter's Tale* (*ibid.*, pp. 209-16), Leontes represents the Jew whom St. Paul desired to see saved; Paulina is the St. Paul who helps him; Mamillius, who dies, suggests the Jewish Church; 'Perdita... consistently referred to as the heir in the play, suggests the true Church'; while Hermione's 'correspondence to the incarnation of divine grace, Jesus Christ', means that her progress through the play re-enacts 'the familiar career of Jesus from Gethsemane to Golgotha'. See Frye 1963, pp. 37-9, for comment.
 - 9 'Some Limitations of a Christian Approach to Shakespeare', originally in *English Literary History* 22 (1955),

repr. in and quoted from Rabkin 1964, pp. 217-29, at p. 222.

- 10 In addition to Frye and Barnet see Levin 1979, pp. 212-26, 244-5. A fundamental study, widely researched and soberly argued, rejecting the view that *King Lear* is an optimistically Christian drama, is William R. Elton, *King Lear and the Gods* (San Marino, Cal., 1966; 2nd ed., Lexington, Ky., 1988). In the new edition Elton surveys criticism of the play between 1967 and 1987 (pp. 339-45), including further Christian allegorising. For other examples, see a bibliographical guide to recent criticism (Wells 1990) which includes an account of *Measure for Measure* in which Isabella is the target of Protestant anti-monastic satire, and the Duke acts in a way analogous to God (pp. 150-1); also another that sees Timon of Athens performing 'a literal imitation of Christ' (p. 309).
- 11 See Vickers 1989, pp. 135-93.
- 12 Some feminist critics, at least, see Volumnia as the domineering mother, instilling her values into Coriolanus, using emotional blackmail when he disagrees with her: e.g., Woodbridge 1984, p. 220 note 12. Bamber 1982 equates Volumnia with Lady Macbeth: 'each urges the hero beyond the limits of decency in his struggle for power' in the world (p. 91). 'By the end of the play', she writes — although the remark is valid much earlier — 'the plot has separated Volumnia and Coriolanus; indeed, they are finally mortal antagonists' (p. 92).
- 13 Cf. those passages in *Jubilate Agno* on the alphabet, where English letters are given an individual significance (like that ascribed to Hebrew characters by the Cabbalists), such as 'For A is the beginning of learning and the door of heaven', 'For E is eternity — such is the power of the English letters taken singly', or 'For M is musick and therefore he is God': *The Poetical Works of Christopher Smart, I: Jubilate Agno*, ed. Karina

- Williamson (Oxford, 1980), pp. 76-8, 91.
- 14 *Shakespeare Quarterly* 32 (1981): p. 404.
 - 15 In this latest book Siegel repeatedly claims that his earlier study (Siegel 1957) was Marxist (e.g., pp. 15, 30). Even with the wisdom of hindsight I find few traces of Marxism there, and I would hardly describe John F. Danby as 'Marxist influenced' (p. 143, note 34). Equally vague, in my opinion, is the claim embodied in the title of Elliott Krieger's book, *A Marxist Study of Shakespeare's Comedies* (London, 1979). The book never mentions Marx, Engels, Lukács, or Althusser; the one reference to Fredric Jameson is to an early, non-Marxist book. In fact, Krieger's essay — like some other self-proclaimed 'Marxist' readings — is more Freudian, as in its account of Rosalind's 'feigned homosexual courtship of Orlando', which 'precisely reverses the process of paranoid delusional formation that Freud describes': pp. 81-3. The main ideas or analytic models for Krieger's book, which is disappointing in every respect, are the two articles he lists on p. 171, note 1 (Hawkins) and 3 (Berger): The dilution of Marxism in America has reached the point where one recent commentator can observe that 'in American universities critical affiliations like... Marxism are not linked to systematic thought. (They are like our political parties, confusing to Europeans because they are important but ideologically evasive and inconsistent.) It is possible in the United States to describe oneself and be perceived as a Marxist literary critic without believing in the class struggle as the principal motor force in history; without believing in the theory of surplus value; without believing in the determining power of economic base over ideological superstructure; without believing in the inevitability, let alone the imminence, of capitalism's collapse' (Greenblatt 1990, p. 3). The 'affiliation' is almost meaningless, then.
 - 16 Weimann 1978, revised, updated and translated by Robert Schwartz from Weimann, *Shakespeare und die Tradition des Volkstheaters* (Berlin, 1967). For favourable comments by the Cultural Materialist school of critics, see, e.g., Drakakis 1985, pp. 15-16 (Weimann is said to have reconstructed 'the material historical conditions of performance, representation and reception, all of which are shown to be related dialectically to each other'); Evans 1985, p. 76 ('really is, by a long stretch, the best book... on the Comedies... fills the historical gap between the Bakhtinian 'carnival' and the Elizabethan and Jacobean stage') and p. 77 (accepting the *locus / platea* distinction as one between 'sealed illusion' and 'utopian levelling'); Rose 1985, p. 117 (also accepting 'the Renaissance division between non-representational and illusionistic stage space'); Kavanagh 1985, p. 232, note 2 (Weimann 'gives an excellent understanding of the disparate sources that nourished Shakespeare's work'); 'arguably the most penetrating analysis of the problem to date': Drakakis, in Holderness 1988, p. 36. For a more extensive critique, including comments on Weimann's ideologically-derived distortions of Greek, medieval, and Tudor drama, see my review in *Shakespeare Quarterly* 32 (1981): pp. 107-18.
 - 17 These include such extraordinarily outdated studies as Hermann Reich on *Der Mimus: Ein litterarentwicklungsgeschichtlicher Versuch* (Berlin, 1903) and *Der Mann mit dem Eselskopf* (Weimar, 1904); Robert Petsch, *Das deutsche Volksrätsel* (Strassburg, 1917); L.W. Cushman, *The Devil and the Vice in the English Dramatic Literature before Shakespeare* (Halle, 1900); Otto Lüdwig, *Werke* (Berlin, 1908).
 - 18 I.M. Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion. An Anthropological Study of Spirit Possession and Shamanism* (Harmonds-

- worth, 1971), p. 12. On the deficiencies of Frazer and Gilbert Murray see E.E. Evans-Pritchard, *Theories of Primitive Religion* (Oxford, 1965); Joseph Fontenrose, *The Ritual Theory of Myth* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1966); G.S. Kirk, *Myth* (Cambridge, 1970), pp. 1-31; and Vickers 1973, pp. 3-51. The definitive exposure of the 'ritual origins' theory of drama remains Sir Arthur Pickard-Cambridge, *Diithyramb, Tragedy and Comedy* (Oxford, 1927) — but not in the sadly emasculated second edition by T.B.L. Webster (Oxford, 1962). See also Gerald Else, *The Origin and Early Form of Greek Tragedy* (Cambridge, Mass., 1965).
- 19 Margaret Murray's thesis that witches were adherents of a surviving pagan religion has been unanimously demolished by the leading modern authorities: see Alan Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England* (London, 1970), p. 10; Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (Harmondsworth, 1973), pp. 518 note, 614-15, 627; and Max Marwick (ed.), *Witchcraft and Sorcery* (Harmondsworth, 1982), for quite devastating comments on the inadequacy of her work by a number of scholars: Norman Cohn (pp. 146-52, listing 6 other researchers in this field who have dismissed it as worthless: p. 149); Marwick himself (p. 231); Macfarlane (pp. 233-4; from his Oxford D.Phil. thesis); and pp. 327-9 (M.J. Kephart). It is hard to convey to anyone not familiar with recent scholarly work on witchcraft how utterly and completely Murray's work has been discredited.
- 20 In the introduction and elsewhere Weimann accepts Gilbert Murray, but pours scorn on the American critics Francis Fergusson (p. xx, 128) and O.B. Hardison, Jr. (p. 271 note 23) for using ideas which simply derive from Murray. Margaret Murray's 'anthropological' speculations on Robin Hood are referred

to seriously in the text (p. 28), but a footnote cites a modern anthropologist's evaluation of Murray's belief in 'vegetation-magic' surviving in witch-cults as 'totally false' (p. 268 note 38). Weimann attacks Northrop Frye's work but indulges in the same kinds of post-Frazerian speculations himself. Indeed Frazer's misguided concepts of homeopathic magic survive in Weimann's account of the folk play as supposedly bringing 'sympathetic' luck (p. 19), or disguise as having a 'sympathetic magical function' (p. 47). There are far too many opportunistic attacks on modern American critics: the traditions that formed Weimann were also political, namely the Cold War and the Berlin wall. Weimann did after all rise to a high post in the Akademie der Wissenschaften of the DDR, and it would be naïve to imagine that he could do so without conforming to the governing ideology.

- 21 Few readers of the Weston-sub-Edge Mummies' Play will see any connection with the 'magical' or ritual origins of drama when the fool confronts St. George with this Victorian nonsense verse:

You lash me and smash me
small as Flies,
Send me to Jamaica to
make Mince Pies.

True to his liking for unprovable speculations about 'primitive tradition', Weimann suggests that the dragon slain by St. George may be linked with such incarnations of 'the vital powers of life-giving' as 'the Northern Wildhug, the guardian of a well', so that 'the context of a fertility ritual does not seem too far-fetched' (p. 38). Killing such a 'beneficent creature', however, would make St. George an eternal villain, not a British hero.

- 22 Alfred Harbage's thesis, in *Shakespeare's Audience* (New York, 1941), that Shakespeare wrote for a middle and working class audience, was criticised by Ann Jellalie Cook

in *Shakespeare Studies* (1974) for relying on fragile demographic evidence. In her later book, however, *The Privileged Playgoers of Shakespeare's London, 1576-1642* (Princeton, N.J., 1981), Cook switched track, arguing that the average playgoer belonged to an elite or 'privileged' audience. For some counter-evidence see Andrew Gurr, *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London* (Cambridge, 1987), and further studies cited on p. 252, notes 5ff.

- 23 See Bradbrook, *The Rise of the Common Player* (London, 1962), and her collected papers, Vol. 1: *Artist and Society in Shakespeare's England* (Brighton, 1982).

- 24 *Shakespeare & The Popular Dramatic Tradition*, with an Introduction by T.S. Eliot (London, 1944).

- 25 See, e.g., Peter Demetz, *Marx, Engels and the Poets*, tr. J.L. Sammons (Chicago, 1967; from *Marx, Engels und die Dichter*, 1959); D.W. Fokkema, 'Marxist Theories of Literature', in Fokkema and E. Kunne-Ibisch, *Theories of Literature in the Twentieth Century* (London, 1977), pp. 81-135; David Forgacs, 'Marxist Literary Theories', in A. Jefferson and D. Robey (eds.), *Modern Literary Theory. A Comparative Introduction*, 2nd ed. (London, 1986), pp. 166-203; Butler 1984; Merquior 1986b; Dews 1987; etc. For a penetrating evaluation of the uncomfortable mixture of Althusser, semiotics, and so-called cultural materialism in the work of Raymond Williams and Terry Eagleton, see Catherine Gallagher, 'The New Materialism in Marxist Aesthetics', *Theory and Society* 9 (1980): pp. 633-46.

- 26 Ferry and Renaut 1985, pp. 205-6, summarise the bitter attacks that Pierre Bourdieu launched on Althusser between 1975 and 1980, including a sharp denunciation of his concept of history as a 'process without a subject' for 'simply substituting for the "creative subject" of subjectivism an automaton sub-

jugated by the dead laws of a history of nature'. Althusser thus created an 'emanationist' vision which makes structure, capital, or the mode of production into an entelechy developing itself in a process of auto-realization, and reduces historical agents to the role of "supports" (Träger) of the structure, their actions being seen as mere epiphenomenal manifestations of the power belonging to that structure...' (my translation, from *Le sens pratique*, 1980). See also Timpanaro 1976, with additional references to Marxist critiques of Althusser by Nicola Badaloni, Lucio Colletti, Lucien Sève, Henri Lefebvre, Jean Fallot, Ernest Mandel, and Eric Hobsbawm (pp. 65 n., 77, 194 n., 251 n.); Thompson 1978, with additional references to Marxist critiques by Derek Sayer, Simon Clarke, Paul Piccone (pp. 194, nn. 13 and 19, 202 n. 134), and Jacques Rancière's important study, *La leçon d'Althusser* (Paris, 1974); Clarke et al. 1980; Anderson 1983. Neo-Althusserian literary critics have either never heard of any attacks on the master, or avoid citing them. This is particularly deplorable in the case of Fredric Jameson, who surely knew but simply ignored all these critiques, and while briefly referring to Thompson's *The Poverty of Theory* (Jameson 1981, pp. 39 n., 83 n.) never informed his readers that it constitutes the most devastating evaluation of Althusser imaginable. What should we think of a school that suppresses its critics?

- 27 On Althusser's apologias for Stalinism see Timpanaro 1975, p. 244 n.; Ferry and Renaut 1985, p. 22; Merquior 1986b, pp. 153-4; and Thompson 1978, pp. 78-80, 122-42, 182-92, e.g., p. 130: 'we can see the emergence of Althusserianism as a manifestation of a general police action within ideology, as the attempt to reconstruct Stalinism at the level of theory'. Thompson's description of Stalinism as 'one of

- the ultimate disasters of the human mind and conscience, a terminus of the spirit, a disaster area in which every socialist profession of "good faith" was blasted and burned up' (p. 139); must be borne in mind when we read Fredric Jameson's unconvincing claims that Althusser was actually 'against Stalinism' (Jameson 1981, pp. 27 n., 37), an obviously touchy issue which he then attempts to dismiss: 'It would be frivolous to try to choose between these antithetical evaluations of the Althusserian operation (anti-Stalinist or Stalinist); rather, they mark out a space in which that operation is objectively and functionally ambiguous' (p. 39). Sophisticatedly formulated, that nevertheless seems to me an unethical cop-out.
- 28 See, e.g., Anderson 1983, p. 37; Ferry and Renaut 1985, pp. 55-6; Merquior 1986a, pp. 233-4; and Frank 1989, p. 96: 'subjectivity, which was repressed in the position of the individual, returns as subjectivity of the reflecting and actively transforming structure — return of the repressed.'
- 29 Thompson's summary of its self-constituting manoeuvres shows its identity with other theoretical structures of that group. Althusser's is another 'a-historical theoreticism' (p. 4), which 'simplifies [its] own polemics by caricaturing' its opponents (p. 6). It, too, is based on a union of 'highly-specialised disciplines', the main influence being not structuralist linguistics but philosophy, 'a particular Cartesian tradition of logical exegesis... modified by the monism of Spinoza', and aspiring towards mathematics, a liking for 'self-enclosed and self-replicating' systems which encourage 'theoretical imperialism' (pp. 9-10, 16). Like the other sixties systems in its slippery methodology, Althusser's also uses pat antitheses, artificially weighted to an extreme either/or choice, excluding a large middle ground (p. 15); it makes 'densely-textured... assertions' that turn out to be truisms (pp. 15-16); it mis-uses logic, loading the terms of an epigram 'to trick us into a false conclusion' (p. 31); it thrives on spurious questions, pseudo-oppositions (p. 55); it claims to be 'liberating' its subject, but in fact fixes it in a static system (p. 91); it makes 'the only possible alternative' to its programme 'the most crude caricature' (p. 94); and so on. These are all familiar tactics by which a sixties theorist develops his system with self-validating procedures that evade accountability to other criteria. The result is another closed system.
- 30 'A cloud no bigger than a man's hand crosses the English Channel from Paris, and then, in an instant, the trees, the orchard, the hedges, the field of wheat, are black with locusts. When at length they rise to fly on to the next parish, the boughs are bared of all culture, the fields have been stripped of every green blade of human aspiration; and in those skeletal forms and that blackened landscape, theoretical practice announces its "discovery": the mode of production. Not only substantive knowledge, but also the very vocabularies of the human project — compassion, greed, love, pride, self-sacrifice, loyalty, treason, calumny — have been eaten down to the circuits of capital. These locusts are very learned platonists: if they settled on *The Republic* they would leave it picked clean of all but the idea of a contradiction between a philosopher and a slave. However elaborated the inner mechanisms, torsions, and autonomies, theoretical practice [Althusser's system] constitutes the ultimate in reductionism: a reduction, not of "religion" or "politics" to "economics", but of the disciplines of knowledge to one kind of "basic" Theory only: Thompson 1978, pp. 166-7.
- 31 See, e.g., Nicholas Abercrombie et al., *The Dominant Ideology Thesis* (London, 1980).
- 32 Although we see that Jameson (being also a Lacanian) has silently dropped Althusser's attack on the subject, he continues to endorse that notorious concept of history as "a process without a telos or a subject" (p. 29), and he believes that 'the Althusserian school' has 'effectively discredited the Marxian version of a properly teleological history...' (p. 33). Many historians, Marxist and otherwise, would bitterly dispute that point.
- 33 Despite Jameson's laudatory epithets, I am bemused that he should be recommending allegory as an 'advance', or method of the future. Most modern readers would regard it as an archaic form of reading, a throwback to a far removed age whose problems with the interpretation of sacred texts can be reconstructed by historical scholarship, but hardly seem an applicable model for us, given the views expressed by Coleridge in my epigraph, and widely shared in modern criticism. Does this desperate remedy mean that Marxist theory finds itself in a cul-de-sac? As if the medieval allegorists did not offer a sufficiently schematic approach, Jameson then warmly endorses the system of Northrop Frye (pp. 68-74, 110-19), that 'fearful symmetry' as it has been not unjustly called.
- 34 What is the state? Who controls it? If we all suffer from the same ideological indoctrination, then why do so many of us object to the manifest injustices of (say) the British government in the 1980s, its erosion of civil liberties, its 'sale' of nationalised industries in order to popularise capitalism, its militarism, corruption, discrimination, and so much else? My concern is with literary criticism, but as someone living in a society which has also produced Amnesty International, Greenpeace, Charter 88, anti-apartheid campaigns, and many brave workers for human rights, I can only express surprise that the ISAs have been so ineffective. Or is it because the concept was formulated by Althusser having observed totalitarian states, such as the Soviet bloc? It would fit these, and some Islamic states, but it seems to me irrelevant for Western democracies — despite all their faults.
- 35 P. Macherey and E. Balibar, 'Literature As an Ideological Form: Some Marxist hypotheses', *Praxis* 5 (1980): pp. 43-58.
- 36 See, e.g., Deuteronomy 13:10-12; Gal. 5:20; Exod. 22:18, and Skinner 1988, pp. 242-3 for a demonstration of how the distinguished historian Le Roy Ladurie failed to grasp the historical reality of witchcraft beliefs in Languedoc.
- 37 Jameson, indeed, scornfully rejects the traditional ethical categories of good and evil: Jameson 1981, pp. 59-60, 110, 114-17, etc. For this position he cites Nietzsche, but may also have followed Althusser, who believed that morality "would disappear with the abolition of class antagonisms". See Thompson 1978, pp. 178-80, for a devastating analysis of how 'any "naturalistic" morality' legitimises destructive egotism: 'The reasons of Reason, uncumbered by the moral consciousness, become, very soon, the reasons of interest, and then the reasons of State, and thence, in an uncontested progression, the rationalisations of opportunism, brutality, and crime'.
- 38 Their Shakespeare criticism can be conveniently sampled in three collections: Drakakis 1985; Dollimore and Sinfield 1985; Holderness 1988. For critical evaluation of their work I recommend several essays by Richard Levin: Levin 1989 ('Bashing the bourgeois subject'), Levin 1988 ('Leaking Relativism'), Levin 1990 ('Bardicide'), Levin 1992 ('Ideological Criticism and Pluralism').
- 39 See Ferry and Renaut 1985, pp. 40, 42-3.
- 40 See e.g., Vickers 1989, pp. 236-7, and 'Something rocking in Denmark. Writing music for Shakespeare', *Times Literary Supplement*, 30 August 1991, pp. 14-15.

Epilogue

- 1 'The History of Ancient Astronomy: Problems and Methods', *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 4 (1945): pp. 1-38, at p. 2 (repr. in Neugebauer, *Astronomy and History: Selected Essays* (New York, 1983)).
- 2 Francis Bacon, *Works*, ed. J. Spedding et al., 14 vols. (London, 1857-1874), Vol. 3, pp. 289-90.
- 3 Letter of 11 November 1977, in *Selected Letters of Virgil Thomson*, ed. T. and V.W. Page (New York, 1988), p. 363.
- 4 Nuttall 1983, p. 10, citing Chomsky's review of Skinner's *Verbal Behaviour in Language* 35 (1959): pp. 25-58.
- 5 'Criticism as Inquiry; or, The Perils of the "High Priori Road"', in Crane, *The Idea of the Humanities and Other Essays*, 2 vols. (Chicago, 1967), II, pp. 25-44.
- 6 See G.K. Hunter, *John Lyly: The Humanist As Courtier* (London, 1962), ch. vi: 'Lyly and Shakespeare' (pp. 298-349), for one of the best accounts of Shakespeare's comedies yet written (pp. 318-30 on MND), and David P. Young's full study of the play, *Something of Great Constancy* (New Haven, CT, 1966).
- 7 'Bardbiz', *London Review of Books*, 22 February 1990, pp. 11-13. This review gave rise to a long-running correspondence, in which the virtues and faults of Cultural Materialist Shakespeare criticism were freely debated. Some of the most cogent observations came from James Wood: see, e.g., his letters of 22 March, 25 April, 24 May, and 16 August 1990.
- 8 "'Fie What a Question's That If You Were Near a Lewd Interpreter": The Wall Scene in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*', *Shakespeare Studies* 7 (1974): pp. 101-13. See also Wolfgang Franke, 'The Logic of *Double Entendre* in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*', *Philological Quarterly* 58 (1979): pp. 282-97.
- 9 'Mise en abyme is a term in heraldry meaning a shield which has in its center (*abyme*) a smaller image of the same shield, and so, by implication, ad infinitum, with ever smaller and smaller shields receding toward the central point': Miller 1976a, p. 11. Readers of Russell Hoban will recall the can of 'BONZO Dog Food' on the label of which 'was a picture of a little black-and-white spotted dog, walking on his hind legs and wearing a chef's cap and an apron. The dog carried a tray on which there was another can of BONZO Dog Food, on the label of which another little black-and-white spotted dog, exactly the same but much smaller, was . . . carrying a tray . . . and so on until the dogs became too small for the eye to follow': *The Mouse and his Child* (1967; Puffin Books ed., Harmondsworth, 1976), p. 30.

10 See, e.g., Goldberg 1988.

11 PMLA 103 (1988): pp. 817-18,

from Alberto Cacicedo, with Levin's

reply at pp. 818-19. One feminist

topos in Cacicedo's letter that I

object to is his assertion that in

Othello Emilia is 'marginalized,

objectified, literally utilized by her

husband', made to keep quiet 'despite

her mistress's anguish'. While

accepting that analysis as far as the

three scenes involving Emilia and

Desdemona are concerned (see

Chapter 2, p. 160, above), I was

disconcerted by his further claim,

that Emilia's speaking out against

Iago at the end of the play is now not

a sign of her 'courage' but 'a reflex

of the power that her husband has had

over her speech in the middle of the

play' (p. 818). I do not understand

this. What is a 'reflex'? Is her courage

merely a delayed but automatic

response, as when a doctor taps us

on the knee? If so, this comment

destroys the meaning of Emilia's

ethical behaviour, in order to

indict patriarchy again. As for the

comedies, Cacicedo complains,

characters such as Hero or Beatrice

say little in the final scenes, a silence

which 'bodes ill' for women, such

problematic endings implying that

- 'profound problems' persist for all the characters. But it is unreal to expect that all the characters, male and female, will be able to have their say in the final scene, letting us know exactly what they feel about the situation. This is to apply yet again the standards of nineteenth-century naturalism, or modern egalitarianism, to matters governed by theatrical exigencies (the need to bring the play to a clearly-articulated conclusion; in some cases — not forgetting Cleopatra — the relatively light stature of the boy actors). To demand that writers give women 'an equal say' is to impose political demands on creative activity.
- 12 PMLA 104 (1989): pp. 77-8, with Levin's reply at pp. 78-9. I must express regret that at least two of the signatories agreed to do so, their work being notable (so far, at least) for its historical depth and absence of vindictiveness.
 - 13 See, e.g., 'A Traditionalist Takes on Feminists Over Shakespeare', *New York Times*, 1 March 1990, pp. C17-C18. As the reporter says, 'the debate will no doubt continue. New schools of feminist criticism are emerging frequently . . .'. The appetite for debate and controversy in the United States these days seems insatiable. The unwary writer who submits an essay to a journal is likely to find it appearing in print with critical replies already attached to it. Such instant polemics may be good for arousing and maintaining heated debate, but they are not good for truth.
 - 14 This tactic is used by other defenders of exclusive systems. As Frederick Crews says of Derrida's selective borrowings from Freud, 'he encourages the theoretician habit of treating one's own system as received truth while dividing all other tenets into those that miss one's point (owing, perhaps, to 'repression') and those that can be borrowed to adorn it': Crews 1986, p. 176 n. 9. An example of this practice comes from Malcolm Bowie, a loyal exponent of Lacan, who dismisses all criticism of the master by declaring that 'most published [hostile] responses to which his thought gives rise . . . are trivial and written by self-righteous bystanders who have tried and failed, or simply failed to read what Lacan writes'. Of the criticism by Sebastiano Timpanaro (a distinguished classical philologist) that "in Lacan's writings charlatanism and exhibitionism largely prevail over any ideas of comprehensible, even if debatable nature", revealing "an erroneous and confused knowledge" of linguistics, Bowie merely retorts that 'Timpanaro's remarks show signs of a limited knowledge of Lacan and premature judgement' (Bowie 1979, p. 147). This is to make life too easy for yourself. For demonstration of Lacan's ignorance and misuse of linguistics see, e.g., Georges Mounin, *Clefs pour la linguistique* (Paris, 1968), p. 13, and Descombes 1986, pp. 177-87.
 - 15 Frank Kermode's edition of *The Tempest* is similarly demonised, a by-now ritual gesture in some quarters, for having such subheadings in its introduction as 'pastoral tragi-comedy', 'art and nature', and 'masque elements'. Summarising the course of 'Shakespeare criticism' as 'having recognized itself over the past decade . . . to be at one of those moments . . . when a "return to history" is on the agenda', Felperin describes the current mood among new historicists and cultural materialists (he himself, we recall, professes to be a deconstructionist although expressing admiration for the latter, English-based group, for having a commitment to changing the world: Felperin 1990, pp. ix, 157 — as if Althusserian-Machereyans could ever engage with social reality) as being one which 'is not about to linger before such aesthetic luggage . . . without historicizing [it] anew' (p. 172). I find it strange that just the dimension being mocked

here is the history of literature, genres, and conventions. What crimes are perpetrated in the name of history!

16 *Timber*, in *Jonson's Works*, ed. C.H. Herford and P. and E.M. Simpson, 11 vols. (Oxford, 1925-1952), Vol. VIII, p. 567.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

While this book was being edited and printed a number of studies appeared which add valuable detail.

1 Preface and Chapter One: The Iconoclasts

My argument that the 'profound transformation of intellectual practice' celebrated by some Current Literary Theorists merely transmitted the iconoclastic ideas of a tiny, homogeneous group of Paris intellectuals has been strengthened by the recent publication of biographical material which will undoubtedly affect evaluation of their significance. As Mark Lilla wrote in September 1992, reviewing Althusser's autobiography *L'Avenir dure longtemps suivi de Les Faits* (Paris, 1992), it permits 'a rare glimpse into the back-rooms of post-war French intellectual life. And like a number of recent biographies and memoirs, [it confirms] that the radical French philosophies of the period had less to do with grand history or our "post-modern" condition than with the shared obsessions of a small group of thinkers working in the highly centralized French context' (Lilla 1992, p. 3). Althusser's autobiography is of great value; Lilla finds, in documenting 'the biographical sources of a philosopher's thought', yet with its account of the deviousness in his political and academic career, and the violence in his private life, it is also significant as 'another morbid episode in the dénouement of *la pensée 68*' (*ibid.*). *L'Avenir dure longtemps*, Gilbert Adair records, 'is only the latest in a series of texts which have had the effect of demystifying the Parisian intelligentsia of the past two decades. . . . François Weyer-

gans' best-selling novel, *Le Pitre*, was a cruel debunking portrait of Lacan. Barthes's posthumous *Incidents* was a melancholy little volume in which he wrote of his loveless frequentation of rent boys. Hervé Guilbert's *A l'ami qui ne m'a pas sauvé la vie* recounted the violent sex life of his friend Michel Foucault, the first celebrity publicly known to have died of Aids. Julia Kristeva's *Les Samourais* was a transparent *roman-à-clef* in which all of the above were shown to have had feet of clay: Adair, 'Sex, murder and philosophy', the *Independent*, 2 July 1992.

Setting aside mere scandal, these writings show, in particular, 'what a profoundly intimate meaning the philosophical flight from subjectivity and the attack on humanism' had for Foucault and Althusser (Lilla 1992, p. 4). Althusser invoked both an 'anti-humanistic Marx' and 'an anti-humanistic Freud' to make the same moral point: man is not his own subject'. As Lilla points out, this was certainly true of Althusser, who 'was not the subject of himself. He was possessed by something he could not control, a demon that tormented him for over forty years and drove him to kill the only person he loved' — his wife Hélène, whom he strangled in November 1980, in an insane fit. Now that we know what possessed him for so long and so disastrously, Lilla asks, must we endorse his obsessions: 'are we all so possessed? Althusser's work today appears as one extended effort to make us share his condition; to persuade us not only that modern capitalism mesmerizes through the "Ideological Apparatuses of the State", but, as he later puts it in his last memoir, that "the most terrible, unbearable, and frightening of all Ideological Apparatuses

of the State is the family"'. Once we have realised the highly personal motivation of these violent attacks on the individual human subject in Althusser and Foucault, Lilla suggests, we may feel less compelled to assent to their arguments. But 'Why their quest for self-erasure then found resonance among an entire generation of Western intellectuals is a puzzle which historians must confront when they come to write about the time in which we live' (*ibid.*). Similar links can be made in Foucault between sadomasochism and his concepts of language, the *episteme*, and power as involving oppression and submission, above all the single-mindedness with which he developed these ideas.

2 Chapter Two: The Death of the Author

Seán Burke's admirable study, *The Death & Return of the Author* (Burke 1992), includes penetrating evaluations of de Man (pp. 1-7), Barthes (pp. 20-61), Foucault (pp. 62-99), Lacan (pp. 99-104), and Derrida (pp. 116-53). While urging anyone concerned with modern literary theories to read it carefully, I pick out a few passages for particular emphasis. Burke links Barthes' 'Death of the Author' with Nietzsche's 'Death of God', showing how Barthes had to create an "Author-God" . . . worthy of the killing', a polemical over-statement which resulted in 'an apotheosis of authorship that vastly outpaces anything to be found' in the tradition he opposed (pp. 22-7). The next stage of rehabilitating the author came in *Sade, Fourier, Loyola* (1971; Engl. tr. 1977), where Barthes was forced to allow what he called an "amicable return of the author" with an argument that Burke judges 'flatly contradictory' (p. 30). Barthes praised those three writers as 'logothetes', creators of an 'autarkic' language, 'closed and oblivious to anything outside itself', involving 'a voiding of the linguistic past and present' (pp. 33-6). But this amazing apotheosis was achieved only by denying to his 'founders' of language 'any representational significance in their discourses, any content:

Sade without evil, Fourier without socialism, Loyola without God, these are the postulates' from which Barthes begins (p. 41). The linguistic 'voiding', then (a concept soon picked up by de Man), was a completely circular manoeuvre: performed so that Barthes could once again cut language off from reality, but at the price of extraordinarily specious and incoherent arguments (e.g., pp. 37-41). Particularly telling is Barthes's concluding demonstration of fundamental and 'insurmountable inconsistencies' in Barthes' treatment of the author-question (pp. 41-61).

As for Foucault, Burke's analysis of *Les Mots et les choses* (1966; Engl. tr. 1970) shows that in arguing his case for the disappearance of subjectivity Foucault willfully misrepresented Descartes (pp. 66-71), Husserl (pp. 72-4), and Nietzsche (pp. 82-7, 94-5). Having documented the rigidity of Foucault's system, which either bent texts and historical periods to fit, or rejected them altogether (pp. 74-6), Burke brings out the irony (as I have observed in Foucault's later writings) that his work 'does contain a subject in the traditional sense, a subject to whom, moreover, is accredited a sovereignty rare in any history of modern thought' (p. 78), namely Foucault himself (pp. 96-9). Burke's account of Derrida's attack on the author demonstrates a remarkable amount of 'contradiction, ambivalence, unease' (e.g., pp. 121-3, 126-8, 145-6). In all three writers, he concludes, the 'death of the author emerges as a blind-spot', producing 'a massive disjunction' between their 'theoretical statement of authorial disappearance and the project of reading without the author', who remains an active presence. 'Direct resistance to the author demonstrates little so much as the resistance of the author' (p. 154): another dead-end in Current Literary Theory.

3 Chapter Three: Deconstruction

My doubts about the durability of deconstruction seem to be justified. An article by Jeffrey T. Nealon in the current issue of *PMLA*, entitled 'The Discipline of

Deconstruction' (107:5, October, 1992, pp. 1266-79), begins: 'Deconstruction, it seems, is dead in literature departments today. . . . [Its] heyday has apparently passed: precious few critics would identify themselves any longer as deconstructionists; the topic does not dominate MLA convention panels any more; in the summer of 1992, at the School of Criticism and Theory, Barbara Johnson spoke on "the wake of deconstruction". . . .' (p. 1266). Nealon records that 'Deconstruction's death is usually attributed either to suicide — to its falling back into the dead-end formalism it was supposed to remedy — or to murder at the hands of the new historicists. . . .' (*ibid.*). His own diagnosis, however, is that the pure spirit of Derrida has been debased by such 'com-modifiers' as Paul de Man and J. Hillis Miller, who turned it into a totalising system (pp. 1268-76). While willing to indict these vulgarisers of the true light, it is sadly typical of the protective devices used to surround the gurus of literary theory that Nealon can list 22 works by Derrida in his bibliography while excluding all his critics.

4 Chapter Three: de Man

The critical consensus documenting de Man's misrepresentation of the authors he interpreted grows steadily. In a collection edited by Luc Herman, Kris Humbeek and Geert Lernout, (*Discontinuities: Essays on Paul de Man* (Amsterdam, 1989; 'Post-modern Studies' 2), Ortwin de Graef shows that at a crucial point in his essay on Rousseau's *Confessions* de Man quoted Rousseau in French but inserted a 'ne' in square brackets, thus adding a negation that is nowhere to be found in Rousseau, the resulting translation giving 'the exact opposite of Rousseau's phrase'. This 'illegitimate' inversion cannot be accidental, de Graef judges (p. 61), adding other instances 'of "dubious translation" or twisted paraphrase' in de Man, warning readers 'to trace de Man's quotes to their

supposed sources' (p. 72 n. 18). In the same volume Philip Buyck shows how de Man both mistranslated and misrepresented Nietzsche's work on rhetoric, by which he made 'Nietzsche say exactly the opposite of what he actually says' (p. 156). I have given some more details of these misrepresentations in 'De Man's distortions of Nietzsche: Rhetoric against itself', in Josef Kopperschmidt and Helmut Schanze (eds.), *Nietzsche: oder die Sprache ist Rhetorik* (Munich: Fink, forthcoming).

5 Chapter Seven: Althusser

Future evaluations of Althusser will be adversely affected by the self-revelations of his autobiography, especially his surprising admission of having had but a slender knowledge of philosophy. As one reviewer reports, 'he was not even particularly conversant with Marx, having read only his early works when he came to write his own seminal texts'. Althusser's skill in extrapolating ideas from commentaries or casual conversations enabled him to bluff his way to success as a Marx expert (his Marxist critics, as we have seen, were not deceived), but he apparently 'lived out his whole life in the terror that his inadequacy as a thinker, his fraudulence (the word he himself uses), would sooner or later be exposed' (Gilbert Adair, in the *Independent*, 2 July 1992). In the end he exposed himself: as another reviewer puts it, *L'Avenir dure longtemps* is 'a public disrobing, in which Althusser presents himself as an intellectual faker who had read little Marx, less Freud, and no Nietzsche' (Lilla 1992, p. 3). Lilla's interim verdict typifies the disenchanted evaluation that many informed commentators would now share: 'Althusserian Marxism was an ephemeral philosophical development unimaginable — indeed inexplicable — outside the *petit monde* of Paris in the 1960s and that unique intellectual Petri dish, the Ecole Normale Supérieure' (*ibid.*, p. 4).

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